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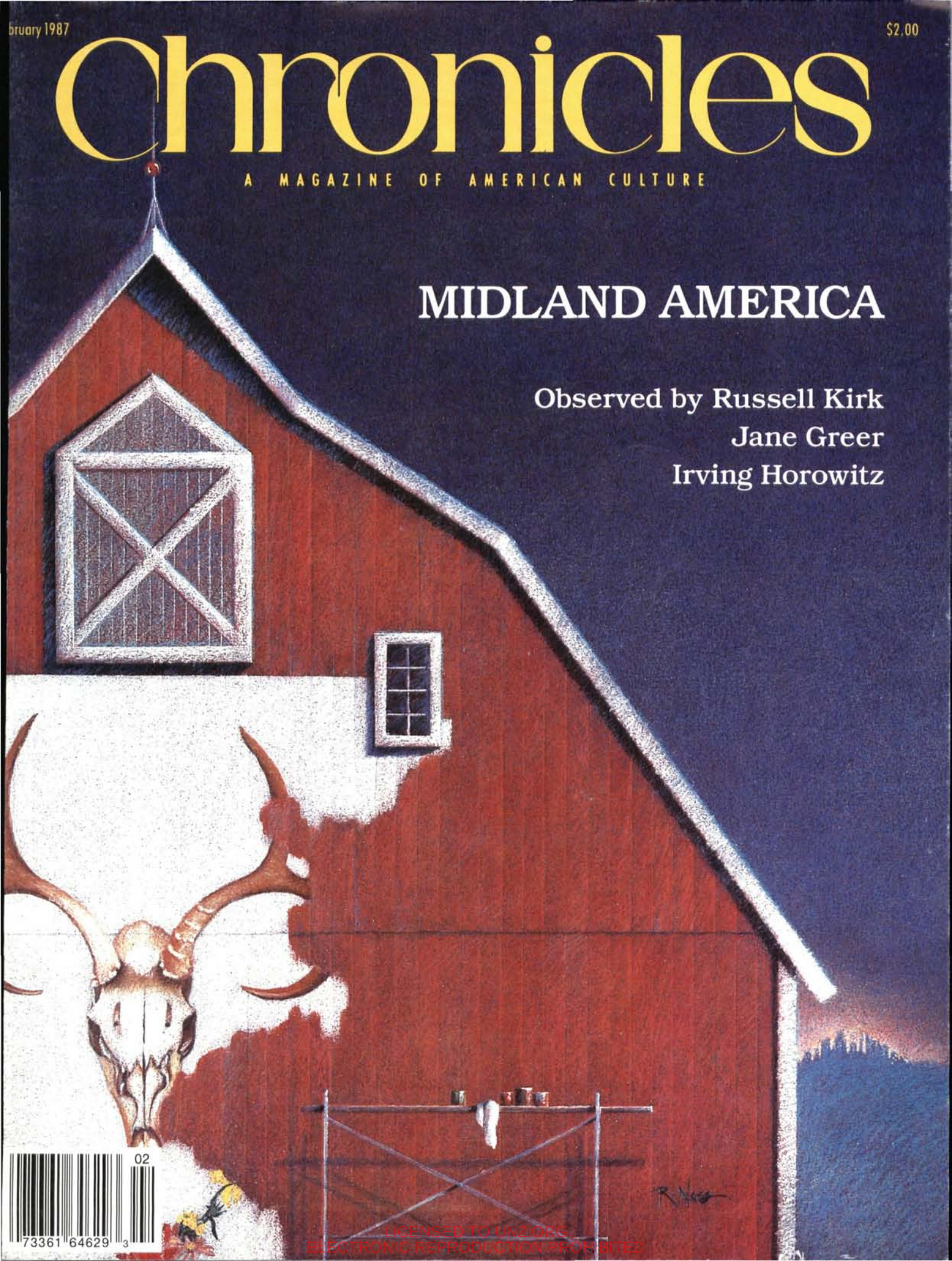
Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

MIDLAND AMERICA

Observed by Russell Kirk
Jane Greer
Irving Horowitz



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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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Illustration on the cover by Rickard Nass and throughout the text by Krystyna Jachniewicz-Zarebski.

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Smith girls had a busy week, 17-23 November 1986: "Central American Women's Party for Peace" had a high old time in the Mulongi Cultural Center as Daisy Zamora (winner of the Nicaraguan National Poetry Prize) read from her works. After the reading, the demure young ladies could attend a screening of *Born in Flames*, a futuristic film directed by Lizzie Borden, in which women "overcame divisions of race, class, and sexual orientation." If they still have a few hang-ups, the girls can check out the Kwanza celebration and hear talks on "urban slang, Afro-Caribbean music, black capitalism, and Voodoo." (At least we know what voodoo economics means, now.)

After all this, Smith president Mary Maples Dunn can't understand why a racial slur was recently painted on a college building. Instead of canceling the Kwanza festivities, she has—what else?—set up an antiracism campaign complete with workshops and national experts. In the words of Pete Seeger, "when will they ever learn?"

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"Why can't a woman be more like a man?" Rex Harrison asks in *My Fair Lady*. Our public schools devote quite a bit of effort to playing down the differences between the sexes and to explaining the irrelevance of the residual discrepancies. This helps to make ideas such as chivalry or the Pauline doctrine of Male Headship incomprehensible, but does it eliminate the differences? A recent article published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* by Dolf Zillman and his colleagues at the Institute for Communication Research at Indiana University suggests that it does not. Even if men are no longer to be chivalrous nor women gracious, the need to distinguish between the sexes continues.

Why do teenagers go on dates to see horror movies full of graphic violence, usually including a lunatic who dismembers teenagers? We could explain, if not condone, masses of jealous middle-aged folk flocking to see *Friday the Thirteenth*, lusting to see the younger and more nubile carved up in grotesque ways, but, as a rule, the older generation does not go to these movies. Zillman *et al.*, found that a major function of the movies was the establishment of sexual roles. The more a female date showed distress at violence, the more the male date tended to like the woman and the movie. The fewer the man's outward expressions of unease—like holding his hands over his eyes and groaning, the way I do—the more the woman liked the man and the movie. The less appealing the man was initially, the more his attractiveness was raised in the eyes of his date by his lack of repulsion at the gore.

"You can chase Nature out with a fork," said the poet Horace, "but it will come back again." Educators can take away from young people all the ennobling and sophisticated ways of distinguishing the roles of the two sexes. What they cannot do is eliminate the need to make those distinctions. A truly liberal education, one that freed human beings to be completely human, would help young people discriminate, not drive them into seeking those distinctions in the gore and anarchic darkness of a movie theater.

—*E. Christian Kopff*

The November Perspective took a look at "Plain People," both the kind that write, sing, perform, and listen to country music, and the kind we usually call Evangelicals or Fundamentalists. As might be guessed, there are some plain people who are into both country music and Evangelical/Fundamentalist Christianity.

This last group—the countrified Evangelicals/Fundamentalists, if you will—was well-represented recently in the *Fundamentalist Journal*. Its July/August issue carries the lyrics of "God Bless the U.S.A.," which was made popular some months back by country singer Lee Greenwood. When Mr. Greenwood learned of this, he contacted the *Journal* through a letter to the editor (November 1986) to offer thanks for the attention. Here, one might think, a solitary and plain country musician was passing along a sincere word of thanks to a magazine that is read by many plain people.

Until, that is, one realizes that Mr. Greenwood himself did not write to the *Journal*. The writer is Eda Galeno, who is identified as "Publicity," which presumably is short for Public Relations.

This might lead one to think that

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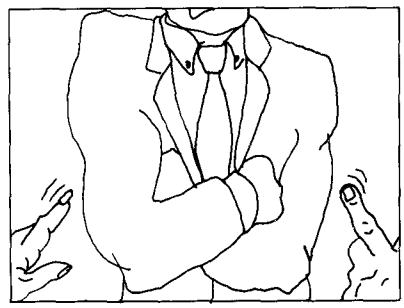
IF YOU DON'T FEEL AT HOME WITH THE RIGHT OR THE LEFT THESE DAYS . . .



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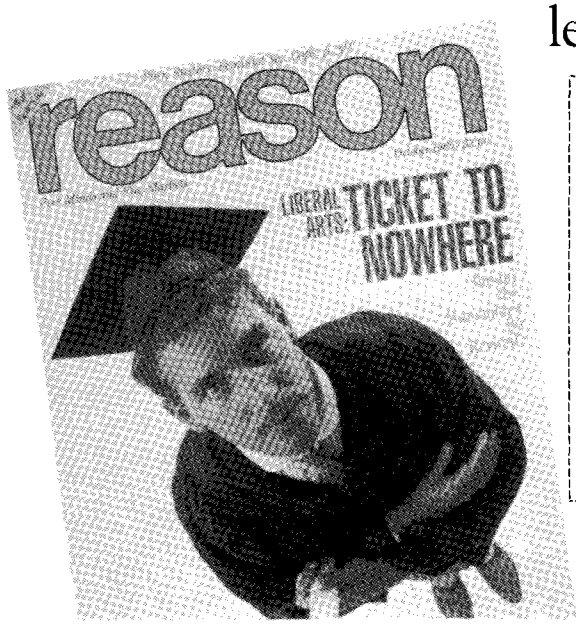

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perhaps Mr. Greenwood is not just a plain old country kind of guy. On the other hand, perhaps the public relations director of his organization is. Or at least a plain old country kind of person.

—*Paul Stallsworth*

The Progress of Modern Dance might have been choreographed by Oswald Spengler. At least that's the view of Walter Sorrell, a long-time American dance critic whose pessimistic perspective on American dance was recently featured in the *New York Times*. Surveying the world of dance today, Sorrell detects a "decline of quality [that] goes hand in hand with the decline of Western civilization as predicted by Oswald Spengler." Sorrell takes little comfort in the growing number of dancers and dance instructors: "Ancient Rome—before it was sacked—abounded in dancing schools."

The *New York Times* is not sure what to do with this man of "stimulating" opinions, a critic who "considers dance within a broad intellectual and rich cultural context." After some hesitation, they lump Sorrell with critics who "identify with the period in which they discovered an art form" and who then resist later innovations—a "neo-Romantic" whose aesthetic development stopped after the Expressionist and Dadaist movements of the 1940's and 1950's. As "a writer defined by his own time," he was unprepared for the new directions dance took during the 1960's and 1970's. (Sorrell was "shocked when . . . a young choreographer . . . [used] an expletive about Beethoven on public television." He was "disappointed when Miss Rainer introduced stag movies into a performance in 1969.")

Give the devil his due: The *Times* occasionally deviates into rectitude. There is an increasing number of culture critics (not to mention political ideologues) who went along with every hare-brained trick, so long as it was modern: withholding tax and abstract expressionism, serial music, and sex education. But we all grow old. The New Deal of our youth or Jackson Pollock is one thing, the Great Society and plastic-wrapped islands is quite another. While we welcome Sorrell's change of heart, we might be happier if he'd just apologize and then shut up about it. There's nothing more tedious than a reformed alcoholic (or ex-Communist) who goes around spoiling cocktail parties with lectures on the perils of drink (or Marxism or stag movies). Converts to any cause ought to take a 10-year (renewable) vow of silence. Which reminds us of our definition of a liberal: someone who screams at his children when they follow his advice.

The Reagan Revolution is dwindling down in its latter days into something that in the final analysis differs in only a few details from its predecessors. In fact, Reagan may have established that no Administration, no matter what its will or the size of its majority, can survive the push of the media and the pull of the bureaucracy.

Consider: An honorable nominee for Chief Justice of the United States is subjected to a marathon impugnation by Senators whose private moral character is such that no prudent man would leave them alone in a room with his female relatives or portable valuables. The Administration responds to this outrage by a policy of passive resistance. Consider: An egregious interference into the complicated internal affairs of a remote country which has never expressed the slightest hostility toward us is promoted as a great moral victory. (Remember that this interference could not have been consummated without massive aid from the President's own party; that, though sought for decades, this interference never before occurred under even the most leftist administrations; and that it is as *certain* as any empirical prediction can be that our new South African policy—if it has any effect at all—will be disastrous for all parties in that country.)

Consider: Under the guise of "tax reform," some of the last remaining

REVISIONS

Agamemnon in Middletown

The story of the Western frontier has become the great American myth, but before settlers crossed the Mississippi or began to fill up Nebraska, the Northwest Territory was the West, the El Dorado that fired the imaginations of younger sons and impoverished farmers. While it may be hard to imagine anyone waxing poetic over the history of Ohio, a college professor from Middletown did just that back in the 1930's. George Dell's *The Earth Abideth*, a family saga of Ohio pioneering, lay unnoticed until his daughter-in-law sent in the manuscript to Ohio State University Press (Columbus). She thought the work might be publishable after the success of *And Ladies of the Club*.

Dell is, in some ways, a stronger writer than Helen Hooven Santmyer, although his story does not move along nearly so well. It is, however, well worth the few evenings it will take to read. It is the tale of men and women who make choices, not always right, and have to live with them, of one man in particular who in his youth seems to do everything right until he kills an enemy and seduces a friend's wife. Living with the consequences turns out to mean shooting one son as a thief and turning over the farm to another from whom he has estranged himself. In the end, at the age of 70, he goes back to the plow, and as he dies, the old man has a vision of all the people he has known taking part in an old-fashioned threshing.

The Earth Abideth, a work of affection and moral force, joins a distinguished body of regional Midwestern literature now almost forgotten in these times when novelists may be divided into prisspants like Truman Capote and foulmouths like Norman Mailer or—best of all—the androgynes that succeed in combining both qualities. If you are satisfied with John Updike, don't buy this book.

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protections are stripped away from the property of the beleaguered middle class which surely constitutes the President's only real constituency. Consider: The Strategic Defense Initiative, hailed as a means of breaking out of the mad equilibrium of MAD, bodes to become just another bargaining chip in the long-running "detente" pursued by previous Administrations.

And most egregiously, in my opinion, an Administration which took office with promises to get the government "off the people's backs" and to return to personal and community responsibility now spearheads a campaign of harassing citizens with "drug tests." With the President's example and precept, this practice is now being extended through the Federal bureaucracy and is inspiring a host of imitators in the corporate, state, and local governments.

It is tempting—especially as we hear the usual chorus of liberals, professional civil libertarians, and union bosses screaming opposition—to assume that "drug testing" must not be such a bad thing. However, even a blind hog will stumble over an acorn now and then, and we must be clear about what the President's policy means when viewed in the light of principle and as a stage in the historical devolution of his Administration.

The drug testing stunt, first of all, takes on the character of a random and arbitrary invasion of the privacy of citizens who have committed no offense. Its basic unexpressed assumption is authoritarian. The government does not, as we thought, belong to the citizens. Rather, the citizens are the property of the government, interchangeable nonentities who differ only in that they are more or less troublesome property. In a republic, the citizen is free and immune in his person and property unless he has compromised his rights by an offense against society, an offense established by his peers after due process. In an authoritarian government, on the other hand, we are only potential "social problems" who are to be handled by the government in whatever way it deems convenient.

Further, such a campaign is a reflection of the irrelevance and disingenuousness of an overextended and incompetent government—a government seeking to divert the attention of the people from its inability to perform the ends for which it was established. The government is unwilling to punish violations of the border—so it is proposed that 10th-generation Americans be forced to carry cards to prove they are not illegal aliens. The government is unable to curb violent criminals—so it is proposed to take all weapons away from law-abiding citizens. The family is falling apart—so let the government celebrate and subsidize "the alternative family." The government is unable to control the importation, vending, and abuse of illegal and dangerous substances—therefore present an illusion of concern and action by forcing a scientific test on everybody. Surely if such measures had been proposed in 1976 or 1980, Ronald Reagan would have ringingly declared that government ought to get on with prosecuting criminals and leave honest citizens alone.

The craze for drug testing tells us honest citizens, who try to obey the laws and stay as much as we are able within the bounds of decency, that our efforts at self-government are worthless and without reward, that we are in the eyes of the government that was once our property nothing except statistical raw material, with no more rights than the worst of our fellows. And what does the craze tell us about the state of management and leadership in our society? In every part of the Federal bureaucracy we have well-paid supervisors. Do these supervisors not know when those who work under them are abusing drugs to any degree that interferes with normal performance? Are they inattentive? Do they not know normal performance when they see it? Do they lack authority to act without the deceptively "hard" evidence of a urinalysis?

And this is the same President who sent his condolences to Rock Hudson. We do not wish to quarrel with an act of individual kindness to the dying. However, a consistent moral position does not emerge from the data. If it is the President's duty to shepherd us into the paths of clean living, should he not be consistent?

In fact, it would appear that this rather un-Reaganish Reagan policy, when its origins are closely scrutinized, is a result of what our ancestors, in a very wise prejudice, would have decried as "petticoat government." I hasten to affirm that I heartily rejoice that many fine wearers of petticoats have won elections and served ably in public office. But why should we suffer under policies made by persons whose only qualification is that their petticoats were purchased by someone who has won an election? Our ancestors, who are now spinning in their graves at approximately the speed of sound, would have regarded this as one of the contemptible defects of *monarchy*, and gloried that their republic was free of such abuses.

Meanwhile, Rome burns. Our politicians, too often, lack the talent to fiddle. Yet even if they dare not even mention any of our real problems for fear of offending some segment of the electorate or media, they can call a press conference and congratulate themselves that they are virile enough to p--s in a bottle.

—*Clyde Wilson*

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PARADISE ENOW: A MIDWESTERN PERSPECTIVE *by Jane Greer*

This is not an invitation. Frankly, if you don't live here already, most of us would rather you stay where you are, although we can't blame you for *wanting* to come. Oh, some of our businessmen and bankers and ministers and mayors and tourism promoters might, in the prejudicial atmosphere of their workplaces, look down and mutter something about growth being good for everyone, but really, when we're home reading the paper or mowing the lawn, we like things here the way they are.

Still, just where—and what—*is* "here"? Do we draw the line at Nebraska or halfway through Wyoming? At Iowa or deep into Missouri? (My aunts and cousins still live in the little Iowa-Mississippi River town where I was born, a bicycle ride from Missouri, and have a suspicious-sounding twang in their voices. The first- and second-generation German-Americans in North Country, where I live now, tell me I still have a vestige of that same twang; they laugh nervously when they say it.) Does the Midwest go as far east as Ohio? Do cows really give better milk on Central Time?

And what if we solved the question of the Midwest's geographical boundary and built a Great Wall (or maybe a "Durum Curtain") high and wide enough to keep out everyone who heard about us and wanted in: What would it mean to live Inside? What *is* this place with the great colleges and college football teams (and the best wheat, beef, and corn in the world) but with otherwise few attractions for outlanders?

Well, as Oedipus said to the Sphinx, that's a good question. Because the Midwest is like a warm spot in a cold pond: You know when you're in it and when you're not, but can't exactly say when you *start* knowing—or what that warm spot's made of. The things most foreigners (from, say, Dallas or Schenectady) think about the Midwest may or may not be true. Are Midwesterners conservative? Not when you look at their congressmen's voting records, or at those who recently have nearly made it to the Oval Office: McGovern of (where?) South Dakota, Mondale and Humphrey (may he be resting easily) of Minnesota. And not when you ask most farmers about farm aid.

On the other hand, there are the radio talk shows airing opinions in support of home schooling and against taxation of any kind and vehemently in favor of total submersion rather than mere sprinkling. Are Midwesterners mostly Democrats or Republicans? Hard to say. Democrats hold a slight edge in Senators and Congressmen from the region, two years from now it may all be different.

What about the huge ethnic enclaves in the Midwest, comprised mainly of Europeans and Norwegians? Well, sure; but New York and L.A. have a few thoroughly-assimilated-but-ethnically-conscious groups, too, as does the rest of the country; and we have *our* share of newly arrived Cambodians and Pakistanis and Mexicans. The Midwest seems to have *more* than its fair share of country-western and religious radio stations (it's not the religion on the latter I mind, it's what passes for music), but so do the South and the Southwest. A relatively large proportion of Midwestern citizens live elsewhere than in large cities, mostly because there *are* few large cities here—but I, for one, wouldn't last a week on a farm, and I'm sure there are thousands like me. Our speech has been oft-described as "flat," most recently in the *New York Times Book Review* by Robert Bly, a Minnesota poet who ought to know—but many of us here feel the same way about the broad accents of a certain senator from Massachusetts. There's the Midwestern work ethic, which, to their credit, the New En-

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gland states (and many Protestants everywhere, I'm told) have embraced; and our weather, which is approximated, mildly, in Alaska.

See the problem? The harder we tread water trying to define that warm spot, the more uncertain we become.

And yet, "here" *is* someplace special. Its boundary degenerates only under a strictly objective eye, one that takes in nothing but stone-hard facts—which have a way of becoming less unequivocally, vitally "true" in the company of human beings. Subjectivity is sometimes the only way to get at the truth. We fall in love because we cannot help it, not because we have weighed the good and bad traits of our beloved. It's not blind love; it's *a knowing choice to be faithful*, of the same species as patriotism: "My country, right or wrong," scorned by all kinds of groups (scorned most tellingly, one would think), is knowing love in the best cases, the kind a parent has for a renegade son or troublesome daughter. My love for the Midwest, where I was born and have lived always and where I hope I will die (a very long time from now), grows stronger each year even though I get no closer to an objective definition or justification of that love. A Southerner, who lives in perhaps the best-defined U.S. region, would have the same problem—but just try denying there is a "South."

One answer, however, the simplest of all, keeps returning to me: The Midwest is singular and love-deserving because it is as close to Heaven as we can come on this earth.

Yes, I hear you falling out of your hammocks in Hawaii, pausing amid the endless thunder of Big Sur to wonder what drugs *I've* been taking. The world is full of fine places, and I'd love to visit them all someday. But capital-H Heaven will not, I think, be a holiday. Something tells me we'll all have work to do there; important, hard work; labors of real love for perhaps the first time. With the labors of love will come understanding, and with understanding, acceptance and the freedom it allows—and suddenly Paradise sounds an awful lot like Peoria or Council Bluffs, only warmer. Around here, life is one long practice for the real thing.

Even though God's Workshop on Earth is managed by bungling human beings, the Midwest offers a nearly perfect blend of work and joy, freedom and responsibility. There's lots of work to go around, and a relatively low unemployment rate. (Data can be massaged and facts used differently by different groups. I know people who figure everyone has a constitutional *right* to a job; to such people, even 1 percent "unemployment," regardless of how we arrive at that figure, is a criminal violation.)

Farmers come to mind first, of course, when we're talking about really *hard* work. Not much is harder than farming, even if you're fortunate enough to have an air-conditioned tractor cab. All the farmers I've ever known have had dirty fingernails and two-tone arms and grit in their eyes and up their noses, at least until their nightly scrub-down. The smart, good ones manage to save a little every year for their old age and to pass on to their children. The others go bust. Even if you aren't a farmer, though, your days in the Midwest are most likely made up of good, hard work, if you want it—at construction sites, in offices, factories, hospitals, television stations, stores, or in your own studio. If you're extraordinarily lucky, you'll have a job you love; if you're just everyday, Midwestern-type lucky, you'll have a job.

Joy in the Midwest comes from many sources: human relationships, the pursuit of hobbies and sports, work well done, and—were you wondering when I'd get around to this?—the land we live on. Each state in the Midwest is larger than many countries; the Midwest is huge, its landscape as varied as America herself. Badlands moonscapes like ours in western North and South Dakota appear nowhere else in the world. The Midwest has prairie so flat and perfectly lush with wheat or corn or sunflowers it makes you dizzy to look around. Wooded hills tower over deep-cut, narrow rivers in Minnesota and Illinois; the flat pewter of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers rests between small, much-older knobs of hills. It gets so hot here in the summer, sometimes, that our livestock suffocates and our cities have to ration electricity, and our winter cold spells regularly exceed 40 below.

Winter here, especially in the northern states, is an opportunity for personal valor—an opportunity some Midwesterners prefer to pass up. My brother recently moved to Mesa, Arizona (he'd lived all his life in Iowa, South Dakota, and Minnesota), selling everything he had and arriving there without a job; I found out only then, and was surprised that I'd never noticed before, that he's always *hated* winter. He now works two jobs and makes less than he did at one in Minneapolis, and when I ask him what he likes so much about his new home, I get temperature and humidity statistics from him. A friend likes it here because he enjoys pitting himself against the elements every day: venturing out when he needn't, skiing, skating, snowmobiling. (He also jogs and lifts weights; in spite of all his exertions, I respect him.)

For me, winter is my once-yearly chance to dig in and see what I'm made of, an amusement for which I have little time in other seasons. The long cold (and my resultant long colds) gives me an excuse to read a lot, walk a little, bundled in my thoughts and other paraphernalia, sit by the fire in the dark and listen to the wind howl. (Often the wind on our hill is so fierce we can't *start* a fire.) I feel—well, yes, I'll admit it—like a pioneer: self-reliant, ready for anything, tough as a scrub oak rooted in rock. I have the urge to see old friends more often. My tastes grow simpler, my desires calmer.

But let's say, just for the sake of argument (one more Midwestern winter pastime), that another long drought ground us into a dustbowl, and another Depression savaged our jobs, and we were all out of work. And let's say, further—although the possibility is beyond my imagining—that we lost all our means of joymaking. It wouldn't matter as much as it would in some places, because what ultimately makes the Midwest special is that here, to an extent unparalleled anywhere else, we're *free*.

Now, that doesn't mean you may, with impunity, take a meathook to my windshield if I perturb you, or that I am excused from paying my bills and acting responsibly. What it *does* mean—to a sometime bohemian who sometimes enjoys other bohemians—is that here in the Midwest we can all act a little crazy when we need to: without being arrested, usually without even being noticed, and still—

(continued on page 16)

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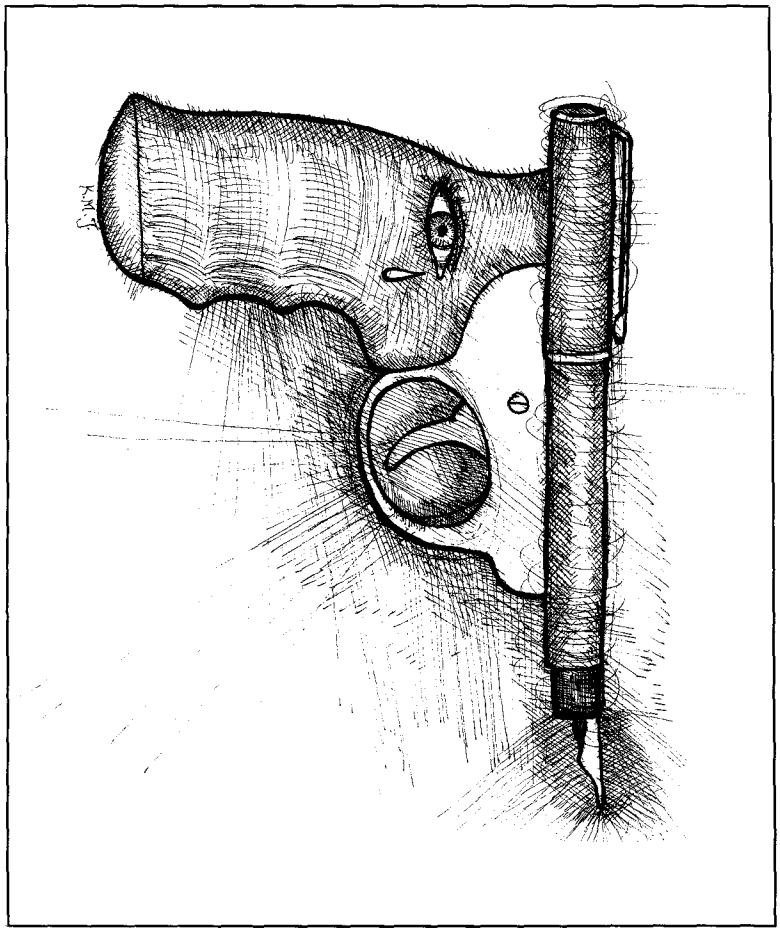
THE GRANDFATHER WITH THE TEAR-GAS FOUNTAIN PEN *by Russell Kirk*

Hard by the railroad station at the Michigan town of Plymouth there stands a bungalow so huge as to be almost majestic, now a kennel for well-bred poodles. There I was born, in 1918. The house—which belonged to my grandfather, Frank Pierce—was one of the earliest of prefabricated dwellings, purchased from Sears, Roebuck, and Company, complete with bricks for the fireplace and the tall chimney, veranda, entrance-hall, handsome oak woodwork, leaded-glass bookcases and cupboards built in, a long living-room bench of a single heavy oak plank (all of my birthplace that now remains to me), 10 rooms, two bathrooms. Night and day, the steam locomotive puffed and hooted 50 yards distant.



A good town to be born into, Plymouth had been founded by New Englanders in the late 1820's. Although only 20 miles to the west of Fort Street Station in Detroit, Plymouth throughout my boyhood remained a tranquil place with handsome old houses (all but one of them vanished today), streets shaded by great elms and maples and oaks, and a square on the New England pattern, complete with bandstand and cannon. The town marshal and deputy sheriff, living next door to my grandfather's house, made cigars in a shed at the back of his garden: This amiable German, George Springer, sufficed for the police power in our town of 3,000 souls.

I grew up in Plymouth's North End, or Lower Town, the quarter of the railroad yards and the millpond. The town's relative prosperity had for its source the air-rifle factories and the great roundhouse, rip-track, and yards of the Pere Marquette Railroad. Eighteen passenger trains stopped daily then, across an alley from my grandfather's house. My strong, quiet father was a locomotive engineman—though he liked horses better.

It was this railway junction that had drawn my grandfather to Plymouth from the town of Williamston, where he had been a bank manager. Beside the passenger station at Plymouth, he had put up a large frame building, F.J. Pierce's Restaurant, for railwaymen and passengers, with a good many sleeping rooms on the second floor. I still possess a number of the pencils he passed out to customers: "A lunch or a warm meal at any time, day or night." My formidable grandmother, who was given to quoting Pope's *Essay on Man* and Combe's *Dr. Syntax*, daily baked an incredible number of admirable pies.

With a banker's sagacity, my grandfather generously extended credit to railwaymen, selling them monthly meal tickets with punch-holes; the Pere Marquette would deduct the month's bill from the pay envelope at the end of the month. A boomer switchman not so privileged, and in debt to F.J. Pierce's Restaurant for a month's food and lodging, left his handsome oldfangled pocket watch in pledge; he never returned, and that watch ticks in my pocket as I type these lines.

Russell Kirk is author of Eliot and His Age *(Sherwood Sugden) and was the 1984 recipient of The Richard M. Weaver Award for Scholarly Letters.*

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Frank J. Pierce did more to form my mind and character than did anyone else except my mother. A village Hampden, Mr. Pierce was the champion of the working-class Lower Town—a village commissioner, president of the town's school board, advisor to everybody who sought his counsel, as many did. He had been born in a log cabin; had shifted with his family to Mecosta, up north; had labored on a farm in the wake of the Panic of '93; had studied music for a term at Valparaiso University, in northern Indiana; had educated himself in history and literature and mathematics; had become a bank manager, and later a restaurateur; later still he would be manager of the Lower Town branch of the Plymouth United Savings Bank, "strong as the Rock of Gibraltar," on Liberty Street, an easy stroll from his house.

The handsome shelves of his bookcases in the long living room were crammed with sets of Dickens, Mark Twain, Hugo, Macaulay. Ridpath's three-volume illustrated *History of the World*, bound in calf, became my introduction to historical consciousness. Presently, as I grew, my grandfather gave me Van Loon's *The Story of Mankind* and two or three years after that H.G. Wells's *Outline of History*. (I would sense that the latter, though so interesting, somehow was wrongheaded.)

On Frank Pierce's library table—later to become the station of the ancestral typewriter on which I would compose *The Conservative Mind*, and on which sits an IBM now, as I type this paragraph—lay copies of *The Bookman* and *The Literary Digest*. (At the age of nine or 10, I would hawk the latter magazine door to door.) These books and periodicals were Frank Pierce's friends: Although he had many admirers in the North End, he admitted no intimates. It was with his grandson that he talked and walked.

Even when, of an evening, Mr. Pierce walked Mill Street and Liberty Street collarless and in his shirtsleeves, he carried himself with a certain leisurely confidence and dignity, portly in both the archaic and the colloquial significations of that word. His clothing exuded the fragrance of potpourri and of the good soaps that his wife, Eva, secreted in his dresser drawers. Theodore Roosevelt was his hero: Once, when grandfather and grandson were at the movie-house, the picture of Teddy was flashed upon the screen briefly, and Frank Pierce applauded loudly but alone, to his shy grandson's embarrassment.

As Roosevelt's disciple, Pierce now and again set his face against Vested Interests. On the village council, he defeated a proposal to supply water free of charge to the Daisy Air Rifle Company—at the risk of being dismissed from his post at the bank through the vengeance of Daisy.

Should young married couples without visible assets be unable to qualify for a bank loan, Frank Pierce might advance them a sum from his own pocket, out of his salary of $200 a month, thereby laying up treasure in Heaven, conceivably—although he never spoke of Heaven or Hell—but not here below, for he took no interest on such private loans. As a small boy, I spent much time with him at the bank, stamping cancellations or endorsements on checks for him, and even making building blocks of the safety-deposit boxes in the vault.

He was perfectly honest and perfectly fearless. Bank robberies were all the rage in the later 1920's, and the North End branch of the Plymouth United Savings Bank was not spared. In a handy drawer there, Pierce kept his revolver; in the breast pocket of his jacket, a tear-gas fountain pen.

He foiled several attempts at robbery. On one occasion, a crazy farmer thrust a shotgun in his face, declaring that the bank had cheated him and must give him all its money. Mr. Pierce calmly stated that first he must telephone the bank's president to obtain permission for so large a transaction; the farmer assented. Actually Mr. Pierce called George Springer, the deputy sheriff, and that worthy neighbor scurried through the alley to the bank, crept upon the farmer, and disarmed him. In the winter of 1929, confronted by two armed men, Pierce dropped below the tellers' counter and pulled the tear-gas lever. Because the bank's janitor had a way of hitting that lever with his push-broom accidentally, so sending staff and customers flying outdoors with streaming eyes, the gas canister happened to be empty; but the noise of its explosion was mistaken by the robbers for a gunshot, and they dashed away, to be caught by George Springer in the street.

Mr. Pierce's only defeat occurred near the end of his life. Starting out early one morning to walk from his house to the bank, he was asked directions by two persons sitting in a car parked at the curb. In his courteous way, the old gentleman came up close to reply. On being greeted by the muzzle of a submachine gun, he found it necessary to enter the automobile. Of the occupants, one was a hardfaced voluble man, clearly an accomplished professional criminal; the other, who never spoke, was dressed as a woman, but presumably was a disguised man.

Having driven Pierce to the bank, these two compelled him to unlock the street door, entered, and demanded that he open the vault. He told his captors that a time-lock secured the vault, even against himself until the hour of eight. "We know that already, Mr. Pierce," the voluble man said. "We'll wait the half hour."

During the interval, the principal robber favored Mr. Pierce with some account of his life and hard times. The man subscribed to the argument of the sophist Thrasymachus (although without reference to *The Republic*) that laws are a device of the strong to exploit the weak. This philosophical bandit had been born to low estate; but knowing himself by nature one of the strong, he had set out to redress his condition; and by setting the law at defiance, he had succeeded famously. This dialectical apology—not put so formally as I have expressed it—the man with the submachine gun offered for disturbing the even tenor of Mr. Pierce's ways.

The hour of eight being arrived, Mr. Pierce was instructed to open the vault. He refused.

At this, the chief robber declared that he must shoot his captive. He explained that this would be a hard necessity, unpleasant, he having taken a liking to the bank manager; but his professional reputation depended upon enforcement of his commands. "Where'd I be if I didn't get the cash every time?"

This Thrasymachus meant business. Frank Pierce turned the dial and opened the vault.

Then the two robbers drove off with the cash and the bank manager. On my way to school past the bank, I found a crowd assembled there, and my grandfather missing.

The bandits took Frank Pierce to a barn on a desolate

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farm and there bound him. Thrasymachus scribbled a note: "Mr. Banker had to do it or die." This absolution he civilly deposited in one of Mr. Pierce's pockets and told the bank manager that he would be killed, should he leave the barn in less than half an hour. The pair disappeared. Contriving to release himself in a few minutes, Mr. Pierce ran out of the barn in vain pursuit.

Years later, after Frank Pierce's death, Chief Springer participated in a lawmen's tour of the prison where was confined Machinegun Kelly, reputed author of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre in Chicago—the extirpation of the O'Banion gang. Kelly told George Springer that "The Plymouth job was one of mine. I liked that banker for his nerve." Whether or not this was braggadocio, it was no casual, masterless man who defeated Frank Pierce.

Never forgiving himself for having opened the safe—though no one reproached him—he died of heart failure in an elevator three years later, well before all banks fell to their ruin at Franklin Roosevelt's bank moratorium. His death was my first great sorrow.

His high virtues were more Stoic than Christian, although he lacked not charity, either material or spiritual; such habits and customs had run in the family, ever since Abraham Pierce had settled at Massachusetts' Plymouth in 1623. Puritanism among the Pierces had faded to the shadow of a shade by the 1920's, my grandfather and his household never attending any church—although the domestic circle's ways might have been approved by Free Methodists, no strong drink ever being drunk nor any cigarette ever smoked in that commodious bungalow by the railroad tracks. There occurred no family prayers and no domestic sermonizing; all teaching was by example, not by precept, and it prevailed. Two or three generations earlier, the family's sojourn in the Burnt-Over Country of northern New York, seedbed of strange dissents, seems to have left the Pierces with no dogmata but belief in a divine power, in a life eternal, and in personal rectitude. Tradition, adherence to this tradition, was the sheet-anchor, and it held.

My grandfather and I, on our long walks westward up a glacial moraine or eastward through the railroad yards to a forgotten ravine (now effaced by the construction of huge factories), had conversed unforgettably, a conscience speaking to a conscience. The old gentleman and the shy boy had talked of the notion of Progress, and the iniquities of Richard III, and the books in the handsome paneled library of the new grade school that Mr. Pierce had built in the Lower Town, and the yearning after immortality, and the significance of dreams, and why the sea is boiling hot, and whether pigs have wings. Yet it was by example, rather than through discourse, that Frank Pierce had taught his grandson what it is to be a man.

A CIVIC PROPOSAL *by Frederick Butzen*

The year 1986 marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Ludwig Miës van der Rohe. Mr. Miës (the plumage "van der Rohe" was invented by him well into his career) is considered by many to be the most influential architect of this century. Schooled in Germany before the First World War, he worked his way up in the 1920's through architectural circles to become head of the Bauhaus. With the accession of Hitler, he abandoned Germany (and his family, it seems, but that's another story) and moved to Chicago, where he was named head of the architecture department at Armour Institute, now the Illinois Institute of Technology. From his base at IIT, Mr. Miës and his followers set out to extend the influence of the Weimar *Weltanschauung* throughout the United States. No carping critic can deny that he was spectacularly successful; thanks to Mr. Miës and his followers, the ill-proportioned, overly decorated buildings of Louis Sullivan, Daniel H. Burnham, and John W. Root, to name a few, were replaced with clean, aesthetic structures of steel and glass.

Consider, for example, the classic Lake Point Tower. It was built in Chicago in the 1960's, from a design by George Schipporeit, a devoted follower of Miës who inherited his post as head of the department of architecture at IIT. It is built on a small peninsula that projects into Lake Michigan at the mouth of the Chicago River. Dozens of stories high, it consists of three residential wings that flow out of a central core, in a "cloverleaf." Its seamless bronze-colored exterior of steel and glass give it a flawless appearance; that, and its location, make it one of the most desirable addresses in Chicago.

Miës's declared purpose in his career was to build buildings that expressed the *Zeitgeist*, the "spirit of the time," using the materials of the age with firm rationality. It must be said, however, that in a way the times are *unworthy* of Miës and his followers: that despite their best efforts, the *Geist* of the *Zeit* seems inclined more toward chaos than toward the triumph of reason for which they have labored. For this reason, the creed of Modernism, of which Miës was the firmest advocate, has been challenged by many young architects.

It is still possible, however, for the advocates of Modernism to recover the lead they have let slip, by a bold gesture that shows how their architecture is truly the architecture of our time. In a bold move to support modern architecture, the state of Illinois could purchase Lake Point Tower and convert it into a prison.

The building meets every requirement for the ideal penitentiary. A prison, first of all, must be large enough to house several hundred inmates in relative comfort, yet be designed so that guards can watch them at all times. The exits must be isolated and secured in such a way that no prisoner can gain access to them. Sections of the prison must be isolated from each other, so that it is impossible for prisoners to seize more than one part of the facility at a

Frederick Butzen works as a technical writer in Chicago.

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time. The building should be physically isolated, such as on an island or a peninsula, yet it should be close enough to the homes of most prisoners to allow visitors to travel to it easily. Finally, the prison should be as comfortable as possible, and provide inmates with surroundings that are secure yet do not exacerbate tendencies toward despair and violence.

Lake Point Tower fulfills all of these criteria better than any other building to date. For one thing, Lake Point Tower is on the proper scale. At the time of its construction, it was the world's tallest apartment building. Each of its floors encompasses approximately 17,200 square feet of living space. If converted into two-man cells of 100 square feet (which is, by present standards, generous), each floor could therefore house 344 inmates. Multiply that by even 40 stories and you have the world's largest prison.

The location is also ideal. Courts have increasingly insisted that inmates not be relocated in areas excessively removed from their families' homes, and Lake Point Tower is certainly located near to the homes of most of its inmates-to-be; yet, it is physically isolated on its peninsula. Fencing off the area presently encompassing the swimming pool and the putting green would provide excellent security, yet would still allow easy access to family members, attorneys, and other visitors.

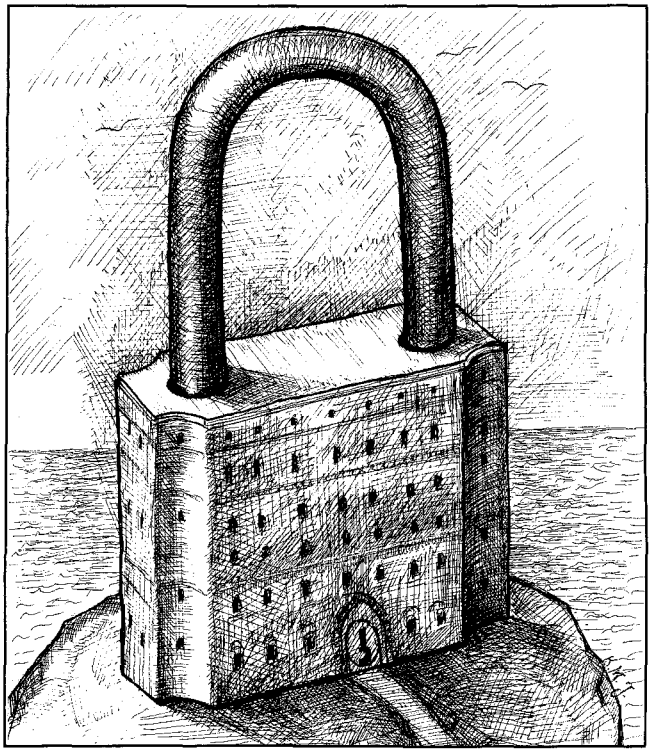
Third, and most important, Lake Point Tower is well-suited to serve as a prison by reason of its design. The building is a three-winged cloverleaf, with the elevators and stairwells located at the central core. With the interior walls removed, an observer standing by the elevator banks could keep close watch on the inhabitants without needing to patrol the corridors. This bears an astonishingly close resemblance to Jeremy Bentham's "panopticon" design for prisons, with the exception that the interior of Lake Point Tower is handled more efficiently and that the texture of its exterior, it must be admitted, is considerably more aesthetic than those of, say, Alcatraz or Attica.

With the present design, guards stationed around the central area could control access to the cell area, yet easily patrol each wing of tiers or monitor the prisoners using remote television cameras, as demonstrated by the prototype system currently installed in the building's lobby. The building's vertical structure makes it impossible for an inmate to tunnel his way out—digging through the floor of a cell, after all, would lead only to another cell. Likewise, the fact that the building's exterior is a featureless skin means that any prisoner who attempted to scale down the outside of the building would have nothing to hold onto and would be exposed to observers on the ground. The conclusion is inescapable: By design, Lake Point Tower is almost perfectly suited to serve as a prison.

Physically converting Lake Point Tower to a prison would entail minimal difficulties. The interior walls of the building are not load-bearing, and their construction is such that they present no serious obstacle to removal. Replacing them with bars would mean that air ducts would be needed only in the corridors; removing any suspended ceilings in the habitation areas themselves would increase both security and the amount of cubic footage available to each inmate. Guard stations would then be installed around each elevator area, supplemented by automated monitoring devices in each corridor. The elevators themselves would have to be modified so that they could be key operated only by a guard located on the ground floor of the building.

The elevators point out the main problem with the design of a vertical prison: that in such a design, it is difficult to move large numbers of inmates easily. Administration will need to plan each day carefully, to ensure that inmates move smoothly from floor to floor within the building. Evacuation in case of fire might prove to be a problem; however, it will be no greater a problem in the future than it is now.

The main cost in this project would be acquiring the building: The building would have to be condemned and purchased for fair market value. However, if the acquisition is handled in the manner usual for Chicago, the price should not present an insurmountable obstacle; the cost should prove less than that of building an entirely new facility, yet would provide an excellent facility located in a most suitable area of the state. Inmates would be well-housed in a sunny, pleasant facility and might well have their rehabilitation eased thanks to the advantage of living in the aesthetic surroundings of one of the world's master-



pieces of architecture. Moreover, this transformation could well serve to improve the living quarters of both new and old tenants alike.

In conclusion, it should be noted that a key to contemporary architecture lies in the phrase "Form follows function"; the truth of that assertion is undeniable, if one adds the caveat that sometimes the function is not apparent until the form has been completed. Governor Thompson and the state of Illinois should give this proposal serious consideration, for it not only will provide the state with a useful prison facility but will also finally give to Lake Point Tower the function to which it is—by scale, by location, and by design—best suited.

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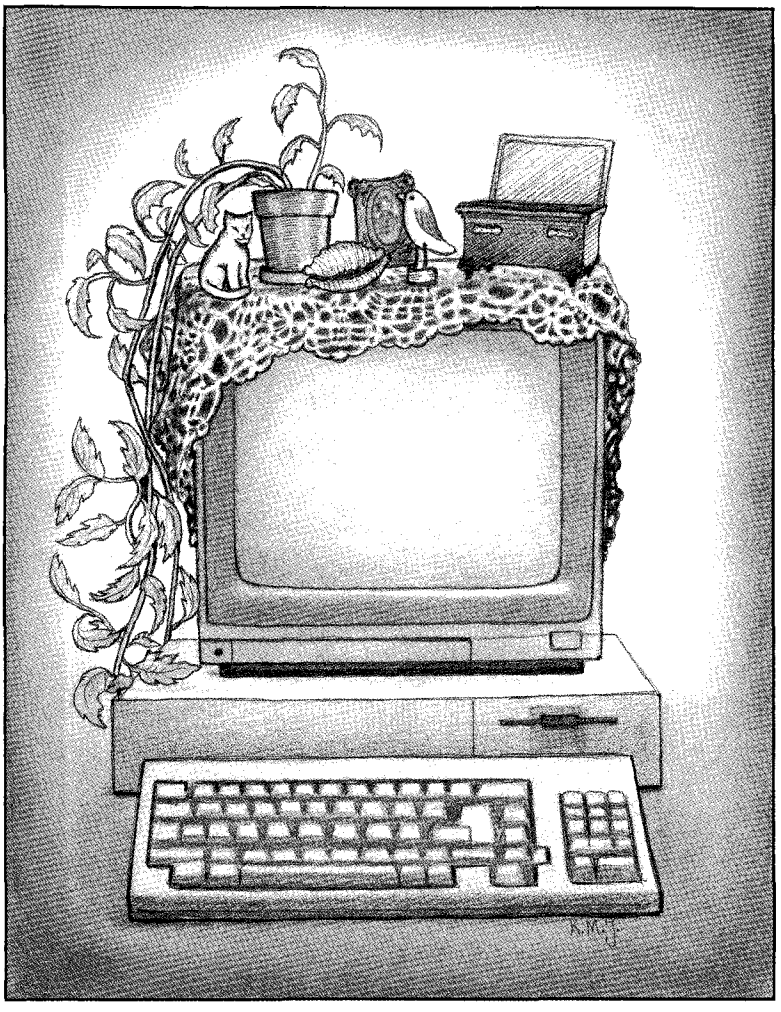
THE MAGNIFICENT TARKINGTON

by Thomas Fleming

The Midwest is a lucky place for an American novelist to be from. Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, and Theodore Dreiser all made good money by holding up their native region to international ridicule, while Hemingway and Fitzgerald did even better by simply escaping to the East and eventually to Europe. Both, it is true, set some of their best short stories in the Midwest of their childhood, but neither employed a Midwestern location for a major novel.

In retrospect, the Midwest is a kiss of death to literary fame. Sinclair Lewis might have thought he had secured his reputation by lampooning Main Street or satirizing the Babbittry of Duluth, but it was not enough: Once the sensation wore off, the fact remained that he had written about Minnesota; and who in New York (where they decide these things) can possibly be interested in Minnesota? Garrison Keillor, please take note. Sinclair Lewis would be appalled to discover that he is now set down as a provincial, a regionalist: He turned down a Pulitzer Prize for *Arrowsmith* precisely because it was given for the depiction of "the wholesome atmosphere of American life." On the other hand, Booth Tarkington, the most thoroughly neglected of America's important novelists, accepted two of the first four Pulitzer fiction awards given: for *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1920) and *Alice Adams* (1923). In fact, there is little doubt that in the first third of the 20th century, Tarkington was the most celebrated American novelist. He was praised by those whose praise meant something: Hamlin Garland, after reading the manuscript of his first published work, *The Gentleman From Indiana*, wrote him to say, "You are a novelist"; William Dean Howells admired his mature work; even Theodore Dreiser had to admire his style; and after his death, novelist John P. Marquand observed that "in all of his rather stupendous career he has never faltered," and added that, most remarkably, Tarkington had never become dated. Even more than his fellow writers, the reading public adored him. Surveys conducted in the 1920's consistently put him at the top of the field as "the greatest living American author" and *New York Times* readers voted him one of 10 great living Americans—the only writer who made the list.



In the introduction to the recent Arbor House edition of *The Magnificent Ambersons*, Stanley Kauffmann observes, "Tarkington, like many prolific and popular authors, suffered quick posthumous obscurity. In most such cases, it doesn't matter." Kauffmann generously concedes that *The Magnificent Ambersons* is worth rescuing, even apart from the Orson Welles film of 1942. What happened, then, to topple Booth Tarkington from the pantheon of literary celebrities? Tastes have changed, of course, and although Tarkington was never "dated" as Marquand observed, he refused to join the pack of literary celebrities who boosted sales by putting dirt into their books. While he thought of himself as a realist in matters of sex, the novelist from Indiana always stopped short of the bedroom door. No, not changing taste or even the inevitable eclipse of a dead writer's reputation are responsible for the decline: It is the character of Tarkington himself—the unabashed Hoosier, the hardheaded defender (and critic) of businessmen, the patriotic American—it is for his virtues that Booth Tarkington has been ignored by critics and literary historians.

Of his most solid and characteristic accomplishments, a sympathetic reader would point to the appreciation of the entrepreneurial spirit Tarkington displayed in novels like *The Plutocrat*; his masterpieces of juvenile fiction, *Penrod* and *Seventeen*; his studies in the feminine character, especially *Alice Adams*; but above all his one unquestionable masterpiece, the three novels that comprise the trilogy he titled *Growth: The Turmoil, The Magnificent Ambersons*, and *The Midlander*. In these three books, Tarkington charts—more successfully than any historian or any other novelist including Faulkner—the great transformation of

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Thomas Fleming is editor of Chronicles.

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America from an agrarian to an industrial society.

I do not intend to provide any *Cliff's Notes* substitute for reading Tarkington or offer a book-by-book discussion of *Growth*. A few words on the themes and plots of the three novels are, however, in order. In *The Turmoil*, a sickly aspiring poet, Dibbs Sheridan, learns to accept his fate as the eventual heir to an industrial fortune in a city choking itself to death on the smoke of its own prosperity. Despised and ignored by his *nouveau riche* family, Dibbs becomes their last hope upon the death of one brother and the failure of another. *The Magnificent Ambersons* takes us back to an earlier period of Midwestern gentility in the years just before its dissolution. Georgie Amberson Minafer, a handsome but repellant snob, assists in the ruin of his old family until he is saved by the wisdom that comes through suffering and by marriage to an industrialist's daughter. Finally, in *The Midlander*, the hale fellow Dan Oliphant struggles to build his dream: a bourgeois suburban community for families whose livelihood depends upon the smoke-infested city.

Little outwardly connects the three books, apart from location. There are no chance meetings between Dibbs, George, or Dan. Apart from the smoke, there appears to be little effort to interrelate the tales symbolically. The three heroes are temperamentally unalike in every imaginable way. What ties them together is each one's confrontation with the spectacle of the economic growth and social change that enriched the Sheridans, destroyed the Ambersons, and posed a critical challenge to the Oliphants.

Whatever else he was, Tarkington was no booster. Unlike Sinclair Lewis, who only hated the way things were, Tarkington grew up in a gentler, more humane world than the 20th century. In his simpler fiction—like *Penrod* or *The Conquest of Canaan*—the well-born Hoosier permitted himself a certain nostalgia for the graceful old times of cotillions and carriages. That was the world of the Ambersons, a family whose fortune may have been founded on real estate speculation but whose members justified their existence by attending to business, doing public service (Uncle George Amberson sat in Congress), or simply by living lives which can only be described as beautiful. But Tarkington was no snob. He was, if anything, even more enthusiastic about the simpler folk who inhabit the village he celebrated in *The Gentleman From Indiana*.

It was a trip back to the Midwest which shocked the young novelist out of his genteel reveries. All that had been so quietly beautiful was being transformed into smoke, noise, and soot. Tarkington was far more outraged by the changes than any muckraker, and there are pages of *The Turmoil* that constitute a harsher indictment against the greed, stupidity, and dishonesty of American capitalism than anything in Upton Sinclair. Lovely old neighborhoods are swallowed up, old families are ruined, and young wives lose heart in all the soot. The most tragic consequence is the human cost. As Dibbs Sheridan turns into a shrewd (albeit highly scrupulous) businessman, he learns secrets of the heart which might be better left concealed—enough material for more than one scandalous novel, he reflects. Dibbs's open and honest face acquires a different look—his mother calls it a "set expression." In the end, Dibbs becomes powerful and successful; he even is about to marry the girl of his dreams, and yet something has been lost. In awakening from his dreams of poetry and refined sensibility, the American has become hard and not a little cynical.

Dan Oliphant in *The Midlander* undergoes a similar transformation from the well-beloved all-American boy into a booster. Unlike Dibbs, he never gives up on his dream, but in his effort to realize a suburban utopia, Dan ages quickly. The girl next door, who had always idolized him, is astonished to realize that the noble youth has turned into an overweight Rotarian:

> What was more to her, nowhere in this almost middle-aged man of business, now beginning to be successful, could she discover signs of the spirit that once would have brought him instantly to welcome home an old friend. . . .

In a sense, Dibbs and Dan are alter egos. The one is the refined son of a crude industrialist; the other is a born gentleman turned booster. To complicate the refractions, each has a brother (in Dibbs's case, two) that runs truer to the family form but fails to meet the challenge of growth. Neither of the two older Sheridan brothers live up to their father's standard of energy and dedication, while Dan Oliphant's brother, Harlan, turns into a snobbish esthete and a reactionary.

The most famous of Tarkington's characters is little Georgie Minafer. As a boy, he runs people down in the street, tells the Methodist minister to go to hell, and generally inspires the town with the desire to see him get his comeuppance. He does. For all his flaws, George is made of good stuff: High-spirited, impulsive, with a touch of nobility, he breaks with the girl he loves because she expects him to have a career beyond that of yachtsman. As his family of Magnificent Ambersons dwindles into insignificance, George refuses even to consider the pursuit of wealth as something good in itself. His response to changing times and new faces is summed up in his favorite expression, "riffraff." At his grandfather's death, the family realizes that it is, in fact, bankrupt, and George walks through a city he can no longer recognize:

> Great numbers of the faces were even of a kind he did not remember ever to have seen; they were partly like the old type that his boyhood knew, and partly like types he knew abroad. He saw German eyes with American wrinkles at their corners; he saw Irish eyes and Neapolitan eyes, Roman eyes, Tuscan eyes, eyes of Lambardy, of Savoy, Hungarian eyes, Balkan eyes, Scandinavian eyes—all with a queer American look in them.

George is humiliated not so much by the change in fortunes as by the realization that he has stood in the way of his widowed mother's happiness by forbidding her to marry an old sweetheart, Eugene Morgan, father of his own former almost-fiancée and a wealthy automobile manufacturer. To do penance and support a foolish bridge-playing aunt whom he has tormented all his life, George gives up the prospects of a legal career and takes a job handling explosives. The book, however, ends happily with a reconciliation between George and Morgan's daughter, after the young man is run down by an automobile.

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In the rise and fall of families and neighborhoods, much beauty is destroyed, but the ugliness is not permanent. Eugene Morgan builds his own mansion five miles beyond the ruins of the Amberson mansion. At the end of *The Midlander*, Dan Oliphant's aristocratic mother reflects on the neighborhood her son has created, pronounces the town even more pleasant than in the days of her youth: "I don't suppose my mother could have believed how beautiful it would come to be." Her ever-skeptical son, Harlan, in refutation points upward to "where an opening through the foliage of tall beech trees left a vista of the sky; and there, against the evening blue, the thinning end of a plume of smoke, miles long, was visible." When he asks his wife if even the smoke has beauty, she tells him that his brother thought so and must have "felt something in it that neither you nor I can understand." This is not naive optimism but a faith in the American character. For all our restlessness and mutability, we will attempt to create something fine out of the ugliness that greed has made.

Like any novelist, Tarkington has his share of flaws, chiefly an easy sentimentality that comes perilously close to superficiality. In his universe there is hardly any real evil but incivility or coldness, no virtues but kindness and candor. In the tragic sense of growth, there are no villains—only flawed heroes. Apart from *The Magnificent Ambersons* and, perhaps, *Alice Adams*, there is little awareness of the tragic dimensions of human life. Set beside Faulkner or Fitzgerald at their best, Tarkington might seem a lightweight. To set against these vices, we have only to mention his extraordinary gifts as a storyteller and as a portrayer of character—especially women's. Because he did not disdain popularity, even his worst books can be read with pleasure, which is more than can be said of some of Faulkner's best.

More important than all of this, in my estimation, is Tarkington's success in tackling the great American story of the 20th century. In *Gatsby*, Fitzgerald fashioned a little corner of that story into a gem, and in his *Snopes Chronicles*, Faulkner approached more epic proportions, but neither of them comes even close to the grandeur of conception achieved in Tarkington's *Growth*, and neither was able to sum up the American story so succinctly in a character as convincing as George Amberson Minafer.

The key to Tarkington's peculiar triumph (as well as to his decline and fall) lies as much in the accident of birth as in his literary gifts. As a Midwestern gentleman growing up after the Civil War, Booth Tarkington actually lived the changes he described and lived them in what was then the most American part of America—the Midwest—and the most Midwestern state of that region—Indiana. The neglect and obscurity into which he has fallen is an indication, all too clear, of America's decline as a nation assured of its identity and its place in the world. Things are at such a low ebb that the publishers of the most recent reissue of *The Magnificent Ambersons* signed up Stanley Kauffmann to write an introduction full of schoolboy hermeneutics like an "Oedipal theme as the psyche's revenge on George for his claustral family pride" and pompous references to "Welles's genius." I will believe that America is on the road to moral recovery only when *Growth* is taught as a classic and people like Stanley Kauffmann are forbidden, on pain of imprisonment, to open their mouths on such subjects.

Paradise Enow: A Midwestern Perspective

(continued from page 9)

this is the best part—without being *surrounded* by crazies. (Although, because we *are* such a large, diverse place, we do have our little ghettos of lunacy, especially in our bigger cities.) Think of it: We're neither California, where one's invitation to community seems to rest solely on one's aberration and pique at all things normal, nor Managua (we have no Managuas in this country), where what is not standard is quietly crushed.

Here is a cornucopia of disinterested goodwill towards oddities, an amused politeness at the tender psyches of the genius and the *artiste* and the sometimes unbalanced (often indistinguishable); here we have both the security of being part of a sane, humdrum community and the stimulation of observing, or perhaps acting, the occasional eccentric. There's room here for the dance instructor grocery shopping in his lavender leotard; the militant feminist, and the shy bride who just wants to have babies and keep her house spotless; the teenager clad in leather and chains; the oil rig or coal mine or harvest itinerant from Texas or Mexico; the flamboyant Marxist professor and his colleague who spends his spare time translating Old High German lays; the buttoned-down shopowner and the layered-look artist and the turtlenecked writer; Born-agains and Jews and Muslims, Christian Scientists and Quakers and Moonies, Junior Leaguers and right-to-lifers and the Posse Comitatus.

Here I can run my business or my family or my love life the way I want, and no one will think it proper to interfere unless it's obvious that I'm hurting someone else. Here privacy is considered a part of community, and license is answerable only to its own excesses. Outsiders might think we're "isolated" here, because fads and national paranoias are slow to reach us; the truth is that Midwesterners are too busy and involved with real life to spend much time fearing the corruption of civilization. And besides, it just won't *happen* here: decency, charity, dogged skepticism, and a heartfelt *laissez-faire* are our defense, as solidly a part of us as our suspicion of gratuitous change and our dependence on the livestock market.

It's no accident that, in addition to being the clearest hint of Heaven to come our way, the Midwest is also, barring certain details, a compelling synecdoche for the nation whose heartland it is. With that in mind, perhaps this *should* be an invitation: What I believe about the nation should hold for the region, too. So: If you think you can handle the *sanity* here, and are content to help us do what we do best, come on in. There's plenty of room.

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MEDIA METAPHYSICS AND MID-TERM RESULTS *by Irving Louis Horowitz*

American elections are difficult enough to interpret in Presidential years. In by-election years, like 1986, political analyses assume the proportions of tea-leaf readings—or so television network analyses would seem to suggest. Faced with complex nonreductionistic information, the media resorted to metaphysical quick-fixes to explain complicated events. The U.S. Senate was recaptured by the Democratic Party, giving it control of both houses of Congress; and in sharp contrast, substantial gains were registered by the Republican Party at the state levels, where in the roughly three-quarters of the gubernatorial contests, it pulled to a rough parity with the Democrats.

Network pundits saw these results in a variety of ways, but all were one-sided. The simplest "interpretation" was that the results showed a battle of personalities, and Americans voted for the "moral" candidate in each case. If this were the case, of course, one would have to conclude that the Democratic Party loaded its moralists for the Senate races and the Republican Party for the governors' races—a clearly preposterous position. Another frequently heard remark was that the results are simply part of a by-election syndrome in which the party out of the White House makes gains over the party in the White House. But if this is so, then how does one account for sweeping Republican gains at the state capitol levels and the virtual stasis in House elections? Clearly, arguments about mysterious, long-term trends fall to earth upon inspection.

Television reporting on election night tended to emphasize the importance of senatorial races over gubernatorial races. Since President Reagan spent most of his time and energy campaigning for Republican Senate candidates—who lost—analysts presumed that the results were a flat repudiation of the President and forecast a lame-duck final two years in office. This interpretation ignores the close Presidential identification with Republican candidates for governor who were victorious in such pivotal mega-states as California and Texas. It further dangerously underestimates the ability of Presidents, especially the current incumbent, to work with party leaders of the opposing party. What was true of Eisenhower and Nixon in their "lame-duck" periods is certainly no less likely to be the case in the final Reagan years.

A final interpretation of the mid-term elections is that they serve notice on the Reagan philosophy: specifically, a demand that judicial conservatism, i.e., "strict Constitutionalism," be brought up short. This view holds that the promotion of Justice William Rehnquist to the Chief Justice position and the appointment of Justice Antonin Scalia both constitute a departure from older activist Court norms based on compassion and equity. But Court appointments were remote from any specific campaign strategies, much less valuational themes. The fact is that when given an opportunity, as in the California recall petition of Chief Judge Rose E. Bird and her fellow "judicial radicals" (Joseph Grodin and Cruz Reynoso), voters gave an overwhelming mandate for the enforcement of the death penalty. The same broad spectrum of California voters who supported Alan Cranston, a liberal Democrat for Senate, opted for precisely the type of judicial conservatism in California that President Reagan and his Federal judicial appointees stand for.

What, then, is the larger meaning of these by-election results? Taking into consideration voter caprice, personality, and ideology, we are left with the rather obvious fact that the American electorate, or the 38.5 percent of them who voted, expressed discontent with American foreign policy and in equal measure expressed content with American domestic social policy. Aside from the President, the Senate is the body uniquely involved with the manufacture and

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execution of foreign policy. In this, the American people seemed to be saying to the President that while they like him personally, they are anxious about the current standoff in bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union at the Reykjavik summit and with potential involvement militarily in Latin America, especially Nicaragua. In this, the results reflect many pre-electoral polls which show that Americans appreciate a strong defense but do not want an interventionist foreign policy that risks direct U.S. involvement. In short, the Vietnam syndrome is alive and well, even if buried under a military security blanket.

In Democratic Party victories from Christopher Dodd in Connecticut to Alan Cranston in California, it is evident that "peace candidates" were victorious in most Senate races. Republican challengers were unable to develop firm and clear foreign policy alternatives. In this, a certain drift and negativism in U.S. foreign policy hurt Republicans more than any specific set of attitudes or postures. Polls indicate that Americans may support President Reagan with respect to not sacrificing a cornerstone of defense such as the Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars"), but they also seem to be urging the President to try again and harder to reach an accommodation on nuclear arms reduction with Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev. Certainly, the new Senate Democratic majority will be strongly impelled to support such efforts at arms reduction and nuclear test bans.

In Republican Party statehouse victories from Maine to California, it is also clear that the American people are expressing intense satisfaction with the Reagan social agenda, despite the enormity of the Federal deficit, which to most Americans seems remote from their personal lives. The soaring $1.5 billion deficit is clearly overshadowed by a continuing period of relatively low unemployment, a continuing deflationary spiral in which the value of work as measured by the value of the dollar is remarkably stable, and relative low interest rates that permit consumer purchasing to continue at record or near-record levels. State and local governments are second only to the Federal government in determining tax levels and fiscal policies. The closer these Presidential themes of personal choice and free-market decision were echoed by state candidates, the more likely it was that the Presidential "coat-tail effect" remained a factor.

There were, to be sure, exceptions to this bivariate interpretation on both sides of the ledger: In Missouri a Republican senatorial challenger upset a Democratic incumbent; while in Louisiana and Georgia, Democratic challengers defeated Republican office holders. But these very exceptions were rare and unusual enough to give great statistical strength to the aforementioned approach to the meaning of the 1986 mid-term elections. In short, the domestic half of the "Reagan Revolution" survived; the foreign policy half faltered badly.

What this augers for the future is difficult to say. My guess, and it is only that, is that it strengthens the hand of George Bush and Robert Dole as possible Republican Party standard bearers, and Gary Hart or Joseph Bliden as Democratic Party challengers. Both sets of individuals tend to an accommodationist view of foreign policy. Likewise, each of them is committed to fiscal constraint in domestic affairs.

The Republicans, who traditionally count on Middle-American votes, have a market-oriented domestic policy. The Democrats, who must now fight for the same multi-class turf, must likewise exercise restraint in the advocacy of new Federally sponsored social programs, whether for the minorities at one level or the aged at the other.

If one looks at the quasi-secret shipment(s) of armaments to Iran from the bottom up rather than top down, that is, as a crisis in confidence in the conduct of American foreign policy rather than as a leadership or succession crisis at the White House or at the Department of State, the same pattern of disaffection seems to reveal itself. Whatever smacks of overseas adventurism, however noble the purpose and whether it be in Nicaragua or Afghanistan or Iran, does not enlist enthusiastic support. The one area of Presidential vulnerability in electoral and public opinion results alike is precisely in this area. Where and when the President is on solid ground, reducing budgetary deficit, holding the line on tax and tax reform, and opposing inflationary tendencies in the economy, there the Reagan Administration has held on to its popularity. The weak Republican Party showing in the Senate, its strong showing in gubernatorial races, and the static condition of the House balance (where the "social agenda" is still unclear)—all point to a centrist campaign in 1988. Both parties will have to seriously estimate the fatal liabilities of extremism. That would appear to be the early warning signal issued by the electorate in 1986.

Whoever the Presidential candidates in 1988, the message is clear, even as the results appear contradictory: support of *detente* in foreign policy and continuation of the socioeconomic *status quo* at home. Whether such a centrist outcome is manageable, with all its tensions and contradictions, remains another, far tougher issue. But the longing of Americans to have both is clear enough. The people have spoken: against long wars and against high taxes. The Presidential candidate who can adequately fuse these elements in the imagination of the voters will walk away with the big prize in 1988.

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles*:

Attic Grace

"Stoicism is certainly not for everybody, and it is not for me in every circumstance, but it is a philosophical expression of the human search for purpose in what we have every right to see as a purposeless world. This is certainly the world of those who find themselves in that ever-proliferating human institution, the political prison. But Stoicism has apt application well beyond that population. It speaks for men everywhere who persist in competing in what they see as a buzz-saw existence, their backs to the wall, their lives having meaning only so long as they fight for pride with comradeship and joy rather than capitulate to either tyranny or falseness."

—from "Epictetus' *Enchiridion*"
by Admiral James B. Stockdale

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The Padre From Chicago *by John C. Chalberg*

"He canonizes himself a Saint in his own lifetime."
—Samuel Butler

Confessions of a Parish Priest by Andrew Greeley, New York: Simon & Schuster; $18.95.

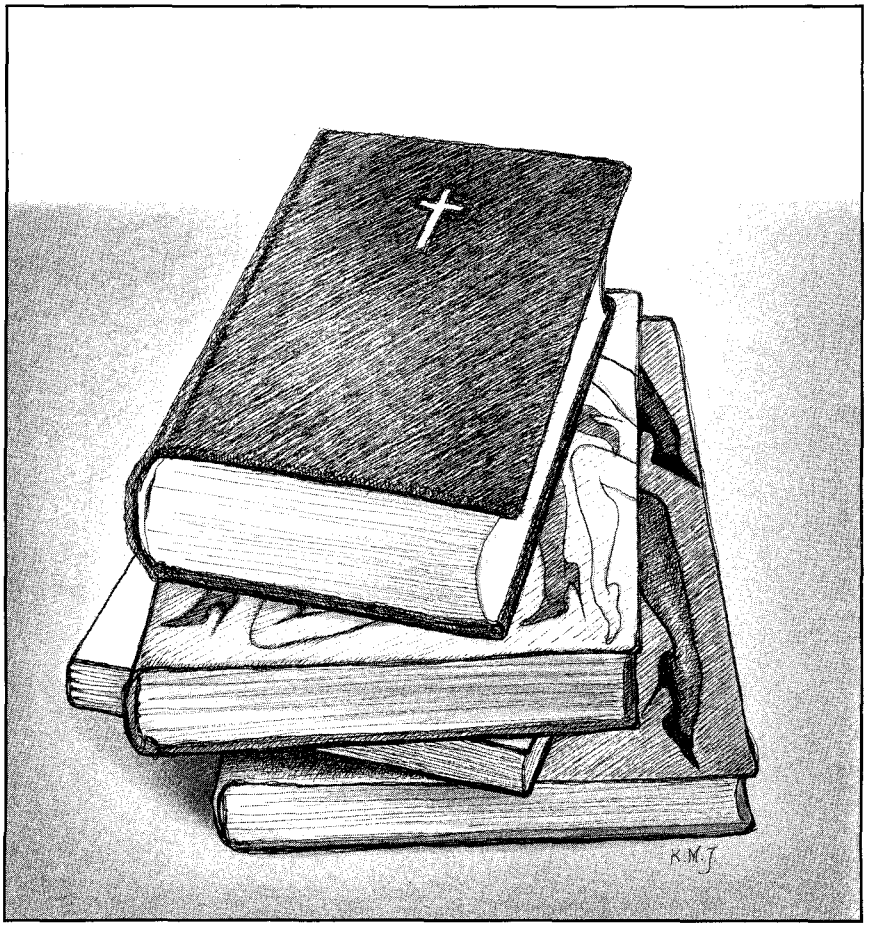
Exhibitionism is a sin yet to be legitimized in Father Andrew Greeley's ongoing excursion into soft porn (or those novels which he euphemistically christens his "comedies of grace"). But Greeley, the exhibitionist, is on full display in his venture into autobiography (or this book which he wrongly labels "confessional").

Father Greeley (or "Greels" to his teenaged, water-skiing, Arizonian sidekicks) has done everything in this autobiography but kiss and tell. He is too much in love with himself to have risked the former—whether it be a woman's lips or a prelate's ring. And the latter? Father Greeley is too much concerned with preserving the mystique of the Irish (-American) priest to be blurting any secrets out. Then again, there just might not be all that much to tell.

Secrets or no, there is little doubt that Greels has carried on a lifelong love affair with at least himself. We all do, I suppose, but not many of us would inflict our most private passions unto others via the printed page; and darn few would pursue their self-appointed task of intellectual narcissism quite so relentlessly. On one level Greeley has written a very candid book. The Greeley persona does come blasting forth on every page. Bursting from between these covers is one always driven, forever ambitious, overachieving workaholic. Seething between these covers is one persistently stubborn, often angry, occasionally hurtful, and forever flawed human being. And cuddling within these covers is one inordinately passionate ordained celibate. It might well have been titled "Greels on Wheels."

On another level, Greeley's "confessions" reveal little and confess to even less. Mistakes? None that he can think of—or will admit to—that would require more than a "five Our Father and five Hail Mary" penance. Regrets? "Destined" for the priesthood, Andy Greeley hasn't looked back since he made that decision in the second grade. What if, heaven forbid, he should be dismissed from his priestly vocation? Father Greeley, forever obedient to his vows, would simply refuse to leave. How else would any good Catholic respond to a hierarchy "hung up" on authority? How else could a simple (but never pious) parish priest, who also happens to be a peripatetic (and always righteous) national celebrity, be expected to deal with superiors who range from "mediocre" at best to "psychopathic" at worst?

To be fair, Greeley does offer an abbreviated litany of those "sins" of omission or commission for which he



John C. Chalberg is professor of history at Normandale Community College.

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is apparently sorry. As a parochial school student, a young Andy was "obnoxious" about displaying his intelligence; but darned if he wasn't "too behaved" to permit himself the pleasure of tormenting his teachers. Those same teachers, we soon learn, were under no similar psychological restrictions. Greeley's father, the son records, tried to teach his sole male offspring just how to handle all women. Nuns, however, remained a breed apart to the son as son—or as adult. In the lower grades, an obnoxiously well-behaved(?) Andy Greeley was rapped with a ruler by a nun on the lookout for poor pencil posture. To this day, Father Greeley (a) hasn't forgotten; (b) remains ill at ease among nuns; and (c) sheds few tears over the slow death of women's religious orders. One wonders what his penmanship is like.

Life under the rule(rs) of nuns also gave Andy the acolyte his first object lesson in living with the "active dislike" of others. He's still learning. As a youngster, he was "naive" when it came to understanding how his teachers dealt with "strange, bright students." As an adult, he claims not to mind criticism directed at a strange, bright priest. If that be the case, this book could have been significantly shortened.

There are still those who actively dislike this priest who has designated his mailbox as his parish. And he knows it—and remembers—and responds. Ad *nauseam*. Blue-nosed laity, envious clergy, and ignorant, if not lunatic, prelates are his tormentors—and targets.

Happily, for Greeley, the blue-nosed laity constitute a distinct minority. Only 11 percent of the readers of Greeley, the novelist, labeled as "steamy" that which they had read, according to Greeley the sociologist. Unhappily, for Greeley, the probable (though apparently unquantifiable) majority of his fellow clerics languish in ignorance and envy. Why so many? The seminaries breed mediocrities, and the priesthood offers a "limited reward structure." And Greeley himself? It seems that Greeley, the seminarian, magically avoided ignorance by reading what he wanted to read, while Greeley, the priest, has magically created his own reward structure by writing that which he wishes to write.

Throughout the book there is the cavalier attitude that demands: "Greeley, love me or leave me." Or queries: "If I love myself, why doesn't everyone love me?" His insistence that seminaries have no right to control the personal lives of their subjects and his refusal to submit to Cardinal Bernardin's ban on novel-writing as a condition of his return to parish work in Chicago are both of a piece.

Throughout his travails Greeley grins his impish Irish grin, conceding only that he harbors a "fierce Irish temper" and an "ingenious Irish tongue." Is he angry? He protests not. But he protests too much. Anger, he explains, serves "no useful purpose." But since when did someone in full possession of a "fierce Irish temper" stop to ponder the uses and abuses of anger? Father Greeley might respond: Anger I have expressed, but angry I am not. Perhaps, but methinks he still protests too much.

His greater failings, he insists, are a trusting nature, a too readily expressed willingness to reconcile with his enemies, and a penchant for avoiding confrontation. Prince Andrew the Pussycat? Ask Cardinal Bernardin. In the midst of a nonconfrontation with the "most interpersonally sensitive man I've ever met," Father Greeley shouted at his superior for a "solid hour" over the telephone. Bernardin "spoke not a single angry word in return." The issue was the cardinal's peculiarly shortsighted request that his diocesan priest cease authoring titillating stories if he truly wished to function as a parish priest in the Chicago Archdiocese. Greeley hastens to add that he called Bernardin the very next day to apologize—before hastening to add that he was sorry for his ill-temper but "not for the substance of my complaints." Another "five Our Father and five Hail Mary" job.

A self-confessed "localist," Greeley has banished himself from his locale, Chicago, in order to preserve his freedom to write his "comedies of grace." It doesn't wash. Nor does his flirtation with martyrdom. A committed localist would readily surrender much more to remain among his people and on his turf. And a convincing martyr would not likely be found water-skiing in Sun Country.

That Father Greeley loves Chicago and Chicago's Irish I do not doubt. His Depression-era memories of his family's tenuous hold on the middle class are deeply etched in mind and print. His affection for family and parish is no less genuine. His parents were solid New Deal Democrats who practiced ethnic liberalism before sociologists could so label it or historians decree its passing. They also taught him to be a risk-taker who would win approval for attempts, not successes, and who would be "free of envy of the excellence of others." The first lesson has been thoroughly learned. The second has not.

A younger Andrew Greeley was ready to pick up his pen at the drop of his breviary. An older Andrew Greeley will embrace his word processor at the drop of a water ski. Any risk to rush into print is worth it. The result, by his own admission, is impressive. Asked (by himself) to list his most significant works, he counts not one, not two, but 21 book-length publications. Whether Andrew Greeley has ever had an unpublished thought only Andrew Greeley knows for sure. That he thinks highly of his published thoughts is

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obvious. One need read no further than this published, but as yet unranked, memoir.

Envy is another matter. Greeley claims to be able to live quite comfortably with the realization that he is no Graham Greene. He attributes his worldly success to talent, hard work—and celibacy. And he distrusts the Berrigans and other troubadours of the 1960's. Does he again protest too much? Would a reincarnated Andrew Greeley prefer the mantle of substantial novelist, the comfort of a loving partner, and the euphoria provided by the star-struck young?

Sprinkled liberally throughout these pages are healthy doses of skepticism directed at the illiberalism of the 1960's. The promise of the early 60's ended with the worship of leftist "gurus" within and without the Church and the elevation of Liberation Theology into the dogma of "authoritarian liberalism." Too many "peace and justice activists" were political ideologues masquerading as men and women of the cloth. On this point Greeley must be given his due. His judgment is on the mark—whether or not envy of the Berrigans helped form it.

But, to Greeley, not all of the excesses of the 60's were equally excessive. Silliness in the streets of American cities he could not abide. Fun and games within his Church he could not and cannot get enough of. In Father Greeley's Catholic Church, popes would be openly elected by clergy and laity, women would be ordained, no one would be "hung up" on morality and authority, papal encyclicals on sexual reproduction would be stillborn, and pastors would never interfere in the communal—or private—lives of their parishioners—or assistants. Celibacy, however, would remain.

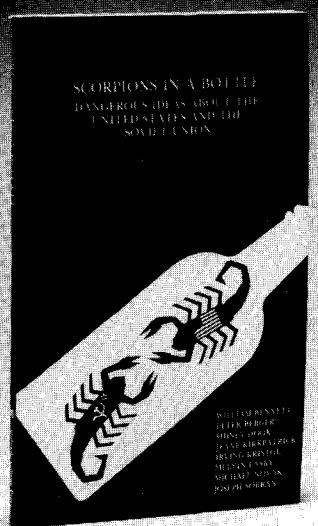
Good ol' Greels, it must be told, cannot bring himself to go all the way. Optional celibacy, he argues, would mean compulsory marriage. He's probably right. But he also contends that "human passion is a sacrament." And in his next ever-so-hot breath he pleads that priests "should not be separated from the human condition." *Thy Brother's Wife* (a "comedy of grace") is an extended portrait of a priest who is very much a part of the human condition. Need more be said?

Greeley promises his "most erotic" novel for 1987. This time all of the eroticism will be between a husband and his wife, all the better to demonstrate Greeley's "correlating" of human love with divine love: "God is like Eileen and Eileen is like God." Good ol' God apparently has His ways of "breaking into ordinary life." Greels, however, prefers to find God in other ways. Water-skiing and word processing might not be quite as much fun, but for now they'll apparently have to do.

The future, however, is another matter. Catholicism, Greeley believes, is the religion of fresh starts. So is America. And Father Andrew Greeley is a very American sort of Catholic, filled as he is with the twin desires for total freedom and unconditional acceptance. He has also assumed that classically American pose of forever keeping his options open. Balancing on those skis must be necessary practice for keeping himself poised between Arizona and Chicago, between academia and the best-seller lists, and between the Church's holy laity and its unholy hierarchy. As if all those juggling acts are not enough, he must also find an intellectual home between those on the left who advance a "morality of secular relevance" and those on the right who assert a "morality of sexual irrelevance."

No wonder there's no time left for diving—or falling—into the icy waters of the human condition. Amazingly, he does find time to read. Lest my evaluation of Greeley be dismissed as unrelentingly negative, let it be recorded that no fan of G.K. Chesterton can be without personally redeeming value. Has Greeley learned anything from rummaging through GKC? At the very least, this autobiography has revealed a tenacious Greeley grasp of the last half of an oft-quoted Chesterton epigram: "If something is worth doing, it's worth doing badly."

SCORPIONS IN A BOTTLE



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School Daze *by Phyllis Zagano*

"A motive fair to Learning's imps he gave. . . . "
—William Shenstone

The Troubled Crusade by Diane Ravitch, New York: Basic Books; $8.95.

Against Mediocrity: The Humanities in America's High Schools, edited by Chester E. Finn Jr., Diane Ravitch, and Robert Fancher, New York: Holmes & Meier.

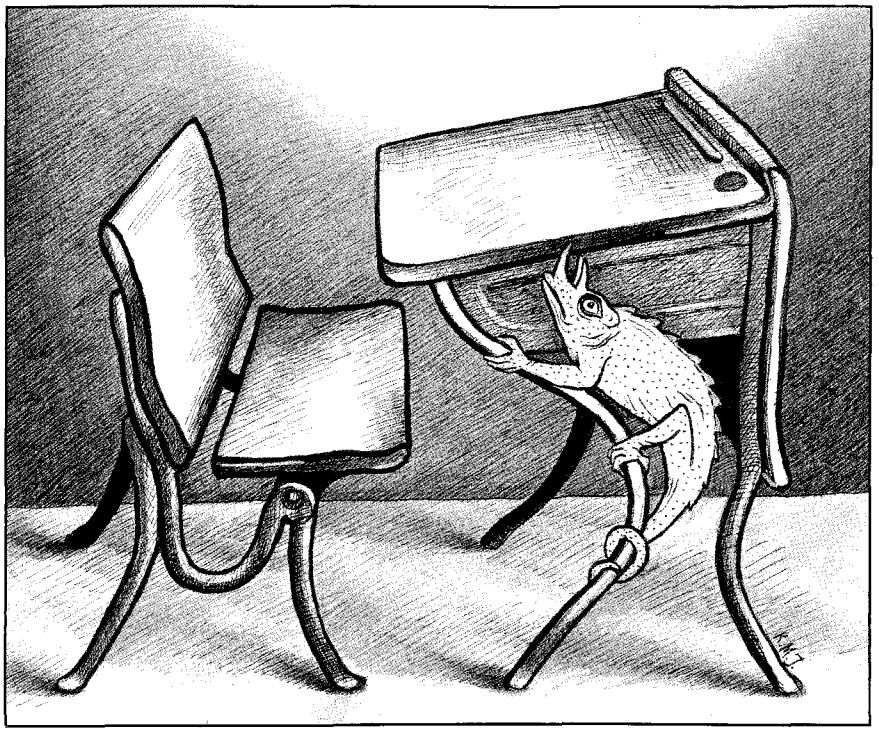
The Schools We Deserve: Reflections on the Educational Crisis of Our Times by Diane Ravitch, New York: Basic Books; $19.95.

The Great School Debate, edited by Beatrice and Ronald Gross, New York: Simon & Schuster; $9.95.

American education has never been in very good shape, so criticizing it now would be a redundancy, except for the fact that we are facing an increasing teacher shortage across the curricula and across all grade levels which shows no signs of abating. Concurrently, we are stuck in a legal impasse which nationwide keeps incompetents, frauds, and persons of questionable character in the classrooms with our children under the double ruses of tenure and academic freedom. Simultaneously, the starting salary of a teacher is about one-third that of a lawyer. Yet we claim to be interested in the educational future of the country.

Curiously, the top players in the Federal educational establishment today belong to the counter-establishment—they are antibusing, pro-classics, and antibilingual education. Their views are well represented by the educational writers here assembled.

Diane Ravitch, an Adjunct Professor at Columbia University, traces the troubled history of American education since World War II, a not-so-arbitrary date at which education at every level became available to more and more people. "In 1945," she writes, "American education had the strengths and weaknesses of a highly decentralized, pyramidal system. Everyone could go to school, but the difference in quality between the best schools and the worst schools were enormous. . . . One's educational chances were limited by the accident of birth and by the color of one's skin." Her scholarly look at educational history describes more than it proscribes. She finds that the failure of the so-called "progressive education" movement was the result of self-implosion. Progressives, she writes, were blind to the "explosive racial issue" and apparently did not understand the full meaning of their separating students into academic, general, and vocational curricula. Progressive education, she notes, had strayed far from what she terms "the humane, pragmatic, open-minded approach advocated by John Dewey."



Ravitch, in a chapter on McCarthyism in education, argues that the times demanded teachers hostile to both Communism and McCarthyism; after listing many who unequivocally denounced the various calls for loyalty oaths for teachers, she finds in the tensions of this period the fragile emergence of "academic freedom" as a concept which would stand between educator and government. After an excursus into the ramifications of the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision, she returns to survey more recent American educational history "From Berkeley to Kent State." It is at the former institution she first finds academic freedom again under attack, "not by external forces of reaction but by student ideologues and their campus sympathizers." Education in this decade apparently devolved into a series of protests, book burnings, marches, and teach-ins. It can be fairly asserted that warm weather and pending final examinations were the chief causes of political and social activism among a handful of students at a handful of schools. The Columbia and Berkeley riots, takeovers, sit-ins, and the like may have been mimicked at smaller, less volatile schools, but they were propelled by a force Ms. Ravitch does not consider: the media.

Still, this book is an accurate, often maddening, look at the past 35 years of classroom tinkering by the Congress, the do-gooders, the radicals, the re-

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formers, the progressives, the U.S. Office of Education (now elevated to the status of Department), and others still trying to reinvent the wheel. In his foreword to this volume, William J. Bennett as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities writes: "The educational role of NEH, and indeed of the entire federal government, is important, but it is supportive at best. We can prod, urge, initiate, and sponsor; but we cannot and should not seek to direct the discussion or implementation of programs nationwide. Effective teaching of the humanities in the schools depends a good deal less on what is done at NEH, or even the Department of Education, than on what is done by parents, local school boards, and state and local officials."

What follows is 14 essays by 15 authors arguing for the humanities as disciplines which will educate students to clear and critical thinking while infusing in them some modicum of understanding of our cultural heritage. But it is former Columbia Dean, now Amherst President Peter R. Pouncey, who sorts out the prescription from among the proscriptions: "Teachers should be fully educated persons in the broadest sense." It is as simple as that. Overwhelmingly, those asked will immediately agree that teachers should be *competent*, but mere competency belies the deeper meaning of teaching and ignores the other qualities which presumably are garnered by those "fully educated persons in the broadest sense" who have our children in their charge. This assumes that persons properly trained in the humanities—that broad range of disciplines which encompasses and includes literature, philosophy, religion, languages, history, and the arts—will have garnered methods of thinking which can engender belief in meaningful morality and caring professionalism, without which no teacher ought step into a classroom.

The several essays which complain of "mediocrity" are at times just frustrated hashing over the depressing educational statistics, the "dumbing-down" of textbooks, the inability of many elementary and secondary schoolteachers to pass basic competency examinations administered by their states or districts. While there are recommendations for a brighter future, the recognition must be made that poor teachers produce poorer teachers. As University of Wisconsin Professor Jon Moline points out, a teacher must know the subject matter he is teaching well enough to catch errors in a textbook, and relatively few states require even an undergraduate major in a particular area in order to be certified in it.

In *The Schools We Deserve: Reflections on the Educational Crisis of Our Times*, a collection of her essays on education, Diane Ravitch examines some of the major topics of discussion among educational critics, including the use and misuse of tests, the tuition tax credit controversy, the place of humanities in the curriculum, desegregation, bilingual education, and the general debate about the quality of American education. She complains about high-school diplomas awarded simply because of attendance and reports that "professors complain about students who arrive at college with strong convictions but not enough knowledge to argue persuasively for their beliefs. Having opinions without knowledge is not of much value; not knowing the difference between them is a positive indicator of ignorance."

Ultimately, Ravitch concludes, we will get the sort of schools we deserve; if we do not have a national commitment to excellence, we will get whatever else we have been committed to in its stead. She recognizes the possible implosion due to special-interest pleadings which might fragment the seeming impetus already underway to improve our schools and our teaching by improving our curricula, our teacher preparation, and our teacher pay, but she approvingly notes the single distinction of American schools in their ability to inspire free inquiry and debate.

And such debate continues over, if not in, the heads of the nation's students. Beatrice and Ronald Gross's *The Great School Debate* proclaims itself "The First Authoritative Source Book on the Controversy Over the Quality of Our Schools." The essayists within include Chester E. Finn Jr., Ernest Boyer, Harold Howe II, Diane Ravitch, and Albert Shanker. Not a scholarly book, its editors plead "readability" as their excuse for deleting footnotes and citations. Such is perhaps the most telling commentary on American education. This uneven collection, part academic papers and part op-ed commentary, is probably useful at schools of education, where they teach courses named "Current Educational Trends" and "Educational Reality in the Inner-City Environment" and "The Psychology of Public Opinion Toward Education." What the authors have to say is predictable to the point of parody, but the work is maddeningly oversimplified and, like most of American education, without focus.

These four books represent 40 more, equally careful or careless, equally righteous or right-minded, which crawl across desks and bookshelves in a poor attempt to recover ground lost to harebrained schemes and wavering social expectations. Underneath it all there is a simple refrain, the only one which honest teachers hear: To teach is *to teach*. The implications of the verb are staggering, yet too many who do not accept the implications daily stand in front of our children spouting half-truths, misinformation, and value-free "morality." In the classroom, however, there is no time for sham. This is the only chance our children get, and we have no right to ruin it for them.

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Liberal Studies

The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism by Anthony Arblaster, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Studies of political ideology come in and out of fashion. Conservatism is in, currently, but off-brand Marxism runs a close second. It has been many years since an important study of liberalism appeared. Anthony Arblaster has done so good a job that it is hard to compare his book with anything written in the past 50 years.

The opening chapters—exercises in definition—are a masterful synthesis of the broad trends of liberalism, whose "metaphysical and ontological core . . . is individualism." Arblaster breaks individualism down into a set of fundamental propositions: the distinction between fact and value, the isolation of human beings from each other (privacy), the use of individual experience as a moral touchstone, faith in science, self-possession (the pervasive notion of ownership extended to one's person), and the sovereignty of desires and appetites. Within such an analytical framework, the transition from old liberals like Adam Smith to American welfare-state liberals becomes more intelligible.

Unfortunately, Arblaster is a good deal less dispassionately analytical in his discussion of contemporary liberals and their moral failure to oppose McCarthyism. Like so many tough-minded leftist critiques, Arblaster's study becomes all soft and gooey when it comes to the Soviet Union: "We have reached 1984, and in spite of many sinister developments, by no means confined to the communist world, Orwell's nightmare of total control has not been realized." It is disingenuous rubbish like this that makes one appreciate the cold war liberalism of Lionel Trilling. (TF)

Put Out No Flags

by Thomas P. McDonnell

Gentlemen in England by A.N. Wilson, New York: Viking Press; $17.95.

A former literary editor of *The Spectator* in London and currently touted as the new novelist of manners, A.N. Wilson was the author several seasons ago of a creditable biography of Hilaire Belloc. But the novels *Wise Virgin* (1983), *Scandal* (1984), and *Gentlemen in England*, just published in this country, remain chiefly responsible for his reputation on both sides of the Atlantic. His biography of Belloc, however, is worth the lot of them and any other novels he is likely to produce in his current mode of merely aping his betters.

It has become by now almost standard procedure for the book-chat reviewers to say that Wilson writes very much like Henry Green, Ivy Compton-Burnett, the late Barbara Pym, or even that he may be compared to the one and only Evelyn Waugh. But since Evelyn Waugh was the uncontested master of the form that is tediously known as the novel of manners and morals, is it at all necessary that anyone else should aspire to displace him? If there was only one Mozart, do we need other and far lesser little Wolfgangs running up and down the scales of their untoward ambitions?

Gentlemen in England, moreover, purports to be the Victorian novel regenerated. Outlandish proper names are invented by Wilson in order to initiate levels of amusement which are but weakly sustained by the characters who bear these various appellations. Still, there is one who comes rather close to living up to his reputation. This is the patriarch of the Nettleship clan, which, in turn, is the central dramatic entity of the novel itself. Head of the family is Professor Horace Nettleship, a specialist in the science of volcanos, whose studies lead him to doubt the story of Genesis and eventually to abandon his Anglican faith altogether. He has not spoken to his much younger wife Charlotte in some 15 years, though they had earlier managed sufficient communication to have produced a somewhat flighty daughter, Maudie, and a virtuous son named Lionel.

There is one scene that either almost redeems or almost destroys the novel as a whole. The reader must decide. This scene recreates one of those public debates which were all the rage in what passed for the intellectual life of the somewhat-less-than-eminent Victorians of the period. The atheist Mr. Brandlaugh confronts the ludicrously self-styled monk Father Cuthbert in the great Hall of Science over the question: "Is Jesus Christ an Historical Reality?" The occasion also becomes the catalyst for a confrontation between Professor Nettleship (who of course supports the atheist Bradlaugh) and his virtuous son Lionel. Instead of following in his father's secularist footsteps, Lionel has become a disciple of Father Cuthbert's and an enthusiast of the Anglo-Catholicism rampant at Oxford in the days of the famed Dr. Pusey.

The scene is devastating, heavy-handed, and ultimately destructive. To have written it, Wilson must have been familiar with a novel called *The Masterful Monk*, by someone named Owen Francis Dudley, very popular among Roman Catholics in the early years of the present century. In Wilson's latest fiction, however, it is Anglo-Catholicism that is made to look wholly and pathetically inadequate in a Victorian milieu of conventional morality that was at the same time unsupported by evangelical the-

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ology. Hence the title, *Gentlemen in England*, though literally derived from Shakespeare's *Henry the Fifth*, seems more like an echo of Sir Leslie Stephen's Victorian dictum of the Bloomsbury enlightenment: "I now believe in nothing, but I do not the less believe in morality. . . . I mean to live and die like a gentleman if possible."

To the extent that A.N. Wilson has caught the major dilemma of the Victorians—that is, how to be moral without resorting to the underpinnings of theological beliefs—*Gentlemen in England* may be a more serious and important novel than its first readers realize. A serious dilemma nevertheless remains in the failure of Bloomsbury to have effected some kind of synthesis between mere rationality and the sacred mysteries of a Christianity now reduced to a state of caricature by the enthusiasm of the true believers. The question is whether Wilson, in *Gentlemen in England*, has in turn reduced the skepticism of the Victorians to the contemptuousness of the moderns.

Thomas P. McDonnell is a free-lance writer living near Boston.

Senator From Nebraska

by Edward S. Shapiro

***Forty Years Against the Tide: Congress and the Welfare State* by Carl T. Curtis and Regis Courtemanche, Chicago: Regnery Gateway; $18.95.**

George Nash, the historian of post-World War II American conservatism, in a recent speech at Hillsdale College in Michigan called for a conservatism which would attempt to change the world as well as to understand it—a conservatism of politics as well as of scholarship. Conservatism, Nash declared, "must succeed in the arena of politics, not only in the realm of conferences, seminars, and academic quarterlies." He argued that an "intellectualization" of conservative politics was, in fact, occurring because of an incipient alliance between conservative politicians and intellectuals.

Forty Years Against the Tide is an example of the fruitful interchange between politics and the life of the mind which Nash believed necessary if conservatism was to triumph. The book is both the memoirs of Senator Carl T. Curtis of Nebraska as well as an extended meditation on the welfare state. One of its authors is Regis Courtemanche, a historian teaching at Long Island University with a doctorate from the London School of Economics. One suspects that Courtemanche wrote the bulk of the book, since relatively few of its pages discuss Curtis' private or public life.

Curtis represented Nebraska in the House of Representatives from 1939 to 1955 and in the Senate from 1955 to 1979, a record of longevity surpassed by only 21 other solons. He entered Congress the same year that Robert A. Taft became a Senator, and he left Congress the same time that a tax revolt swept eastward from California. Curtis never lost an election, winning most of them by wide margins. (His record is even more formidable than that of the University of Nebraska's football team.)

Curtis was a conservative's conservative and a Republican's Republican. He was Barry Goldwater's floor manager at the 1964 San Francisco Republican Convention as well as one of the last defenders of Richard Nixon in 1974. He accepted most of the tenets of right-wing Republican piety: that Herbert Hoover deserved reelection in 1932, that Roosevelt expected a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and that Nixon "was harrassed out of office by his political opponents and by the mass media." Throughout his public career, he remained a steadfast opponent of public housing, urban renewal, unbalanced budgets, centralized government, welfare dependency, Federal aid to education, medicare and medicaid, and the manipulation of government by economic interests. Strangely enough, *Against the Tide* is silent on Curtis' attitude toward Joseph McCarthy.

A model statesman while in office, Curtis chose to return to Nebraska after retirement rather than to lead the good and sleazy life of a wealthy Washington lobbyist or lawyer. His own probity accounts for his contempt for Billie Sol Estes, Bobby Baker, and others in Washington who became rich at the public's expense.

The central theme of *Forty Years Against the Tide* is Curtis' opposition to the nation's seemingly inexorable drift to an oppressive and centralized welfare state. For years he and a few other Republicans in Congress, primarily from the Middle West, gallantly but unsuccessfully opposed the enlargement of what had begun during

BOOKS IN BRIEF—MIDWEST

Great Sermons of the 20th Century, **compiled by Peter F. Gunther, Westchester, IL: Crossway Books; $7.95.** A dozen memorable sermons from leading Protestant clergymen, mostly American. Especially well-represented is the work of preachers who labored at The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.

Extraordinary Lives: The Art and Craft of American Biography, **edited by William Zinsser, New York: American Heritage/Houghton Mifflin; $16.95.** Six interviews with biographers of prominent Americans. The cantankerous but no-nonsense Missourian Harry Truman still fascinates, but Walter Lippmann and LBJ merely remind us of our depressing national decline.

The Greek Generals Talk **by Philip Parotti;** *Tigers in the Wood* **by Rebecca Kavaler;** *Serious Trouble* **by Paul Friedman;** *Birds Landing* **by Ernest J. Finney, Urbana: University of Illinois Press; $11.95 each.** Four new titles in the Illinois Short Fiction series. Kavaler, Friedman, and Finney serve up the now-predictable formulae for academic "creative writing"—low life, sex, feminist rant, and it's-all-meaningless-anyway despair. But inspired by *The Iliad*, Parotti has come up with something fresh and worth reading—the fictional recollections of Thrasymedes, Meriones, Eurypylus, and other Greek soldiers who fought at Troy.

Censorship: Evidence of Bias in Our Children's Textbooks **by Paul C. Vitz, Ann Arbor: Servant Books.** A careful documentation of the antireligious, antitraditionalist bias in the textbooks used in our public schools from Peoria to San Bernardino. Vitz rightly concludes that nothing less than busting the public school monopoly will solve the problem.

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the 1930's. Their forebodings became reality during the 1970's, when it became evident that the social welfare side of the Federal budget was out of control and that the welfare system had created a large dependent and alienated underclass.

But Curtis was more than a naysayer to the welfare state. According to his memoirs, he is the father of perhaps the most important and constructive amendment to the welfare system since World War II—the individual retirement account. Curtis was responsible for a provision in 1973 pension legislation allowing the self-employed to establish tax-deductible individual retirement accounts up to $1,500 per year. In the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, the program was enlarged to cover employees who were also covered by pension programs, and the amount of savings a participant could contribute was increased to $2,000. This money buys stocks, bonds, bank certificates of deposits, securities issued by the Treasury Department, and other investments. IRA's currently total $170 billion.

New restrictions on IRA deductions included in the 1986 tax reform will probably make IRA's less attractive for some; yet for millions they still provide a conservative alternative to the Social Security system. IRA's allow for freedom of investment choice, do not require a bloated Federal bureaucracy, provide needed capital for the private sector, lessen the need to increase Social Security taxes, and encourage individuals to take responsibility for their own welfare. But despite the success of the IRA's, Curtis and Courtemanche remain pessimistic regarding the future of the country. They warn that the welfare state "aspires to be all in all; either it grows into Leviathan, the totalist state, or else the monstrous creation collapses under its own weight." The country may need more than innovative retirement programs to secure its future.

Edward S. Shapiro is professor of history at Seton Hall University.

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Peri Bathous

by Brendan Galvin

***Poison Pen: or, Live Now and Pay Later* by George Garrett, Winston-Salem, NC: Stuart Wright Publishers (distributed by Small Press Distributors, 1814 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, CA); $20.00.**

From front cover to back, the total "package" of George Garrett's new novel, *Poison Pen*, is a shuck and a con. No fictional work in recent memory is so elaborate a satire, and a reader would have to go back to the 18th-century Augustans to find its equal. To begin with, the jacket's slick black stock and white lettering recall the cover of William L. Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. Readers may make what they can of that before turning to the blurbs on the jacket's back, endorsements by such worthies as the Bash Brothers (Dick and Bob), the pornographer Henry Sutton (who invokes comparisons with Lucilius, Persius, Juvenal, Galba, and Gaius Carbo), somebody named Sean Siobhan, and somebody else named Murray Westinghouse, who drags in Wittgenstein and Chung Tzu ("How delightful to be able to talk with a man who has forgotten the words!"). Even the *New York Times* seems to have gotten into the act: *Poison Pen* was recently reviewed there by one "Harvey Pekar," the author of a series of adult comic books.

But we haven't yet cracked the spine of the novel, there to discover that even the ungrammatical liner notes are a send-up of language fallen on evil days, and the photo of author Garrett in mortarboard and academic robe, leaning on a poster of Christie Brinkley, seems to be making a mockery of the fact that Princeton University finally awarded him the Ph.D. in 1985. Inside, the frontispiece drawing by Jonathan Bumas is of Garrett in Type A loincloth, posing as St. Jerome or Androcles or Daniel perhaps, since there's a lion with him. Still other illustrations dispersed through the text purport to depict Garrett's antihero, John Towne, in such acts as contemplating the bust of Al Capone. OK so far, except that Towne looks suspiciously like the bright young novelist Madison Smartt Bell, and aren't all these illustrations rip-offs of Art History 101?

Nothing in Garrett's previous *oeuvre* prepares us for the hellzapoppin' of *Poison Pen*. Neither his two highly regarded historical novels, *Death of the Fox* and *The Succession*, which established him as an authority on Elizabethan England, nor his numerous collections of poetry and short stories, nor his essays on everything from the New South to WASP Jokes prefigure this epistolary grab bag of memos, transcriptions from tapes, letters to Ronald Reagan, Lyndon Johnson, Cheryl Tiegs, Mrs. DeLorean, Ted Kennedy, Christie Brinkley, Brooke Shields, and other luminaries. Then there are the authorial instrusions, lists, denials from the publisher and from the author himself, you name it. In its form, *Poison Pen* takes potshots at the new "metafiction" of writers like John Barth and Robert Coover, and is as zany as Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*.

Briefly, it goes like this: The academic *picaro* John Towne, a character in George Garrett's unpublished novel *Life with Kim Novak is Hell*, has escaped and is writing the letters and other unclassifiable stuff mentioned above. Towne is also the black preacher Radio P. King, hiding out in Britain, and Dr. Wisdom, the author of a porno magazine's advice column. Towne's notes are being edited by another Garrett character, Lee Holmes, a ne'er-do-well academic who hopes to get tenure by making sense of Towne's unpublished novel manuscript, *Realms of Gold*, whose protagonist is R.C. Alger, a descendant of Horatio Alger who is also writing a novel to be called *America, the Beautiful?: From Pioneers to Pansies*. Are you with me,

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reader?

Of course, there's no reason to begin *Poison Pen* with the dedication to Joan Rivers or to enter the publisher's one-liner contest and win $25.00 by best completing "Joan Rivers? Her memory is so bad that . . . " as advertised on the dedication page. You can dip in and out of this novel as if it's a pub crawl and come out just as groggy as if you'd gone start to finish. Or try reading it backwards. This free-for-all has something to offend every sensibility and reminds me of those Russian dolls that open to reveal smaller dolls that open to reveal . . . Except that here you're never sure who or what will come crawling out next. You may enjoy Garrett's dossier, published in full in a 40-page letter to Christie Brinkley, for instance. Or maybe Speedy Gonzalez, who writes to LBJ for a $50 loan while explaining that his father voted for Johnson many times in every election. Or T.J. Payne, a John Towne *nom de plume* who corresponds about his sexual hang-ups and other matters with Dr. Timothy Leary:

> So, if you want to hustle a lot of crazy drugs to dumb pimply kids that don't know any better and couldn't care less, as well as screwed up grownups who would otherwise just be moping around with sad and unhappy expressions on their faces, why I say that is your business. And if you want to make a show of it with robes and gongs and funny-sounding music and nutty movies and a lot of double-talk, that's all right with me, too. If anybody complains, you can always cite historical precedent. Remind the s.o.b.'s of the role played by the Medicine Show in the days of the American frontier.

Quite often Towne's letters contain threats, both veiled and overt, against the "celebrities" they are addressed to, and it is here that the point of Garrett's lance touches the truth. While we are wondering why we are laughing at the egregious bad taste of many of these missives, we are also realizing that the rampant hype of our time, driven by the wheels of the Media, has created a situation in which reality and illusion are inseparable. Politicians, actresses, "serious" practitioners of the arts, and pop philosophers are all packaged for public consumption in the same way; they are indistinguishable, equally believable or unbelievable, and "what we still innocently call publicity is all the truth that we have left." Out of frustration and despair, Garrett hints, may come the murders of such idealized figures, and recent assassination attempts on our Presidents, successful and unsuccessful, may be merely the tip of the trend. Those who concur in their own canonizations may indeed Live Now and Pay Later.

Even such a backwater of neglect as the world of contemporary poetry, where little is to be gained in any event, has entered the Age of Hype, if reproductions of glossy author photos in literary magazines and spurious claims by certain poets to having once been professional athletes are any indication. Among my favorite insertions in *Poison Pen* are two long lists with helpful information like "Anthony Hecht is the Adolph Menjou of American Poetry," and "Dave Smith is the Robert Penn Dickey of American Poetry." But who is the Merv Griffin? Who is the Dr. Joyce Brothers?

Brendan Galvin is the author of Winter Oysters *(University of Georgia Press).*

"I Keek It, I Vin It"

by Richard Kostelanetz

***Less Than One: Selected Essays* by Joseph Brodsky, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25.00.**

Two decades ago, the general managers of professional football teams discovered that the highly specialized jobs of placekicking could be done by sometime soccer players, most of them born and raised abroad. The placekicker, we remember, is often called upon to deliver a field goal whose three points, especially in the game's concluding moments, can tilt the final score from one side to another. This placekicker would then be mobbed by his teammates; newspaper headlines could proclaim that he had "won the game," discounting the performance of the other players who did most of the work. It was Alex Karras, then a star tackle, now a television star, who charged that it was a degradation of a great American game to allow players who were only on the field a few seconds and who could hardly speak English, to scream, "I vin it, I keek it."

This bit of ancient history comes to mind with Joseph Brodsky's new book of essays. Within less than 15 years in this country, he has become the most successful poet of his generation (which is also mine). He took an early MacArthur Prize. In 1979 he became the youngest poet in our National Institute of Arts and Letters. His new books get reviewed on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review*. He received an honorary degree from Yale. Etc., etc. Brodsky is a good poet, accomplished in undistinguished ways, but somewhat obvious and bombastic. He is by no account better than a hundred others his age, a generation that (at least in America) has produced an abundance of good poets, though none commonly recognized as great; but since a lot more worldly success has come his way, some examination is in order.

The truth is that he is admired by people who understand biography better than poetry, and the former is easier to merchandise, especially in America. The immigrant, especially from an Iron Curtain country, has an instant autobiography unavailable to the native-born; and it would seem that the major purpose of this new book is to contribute to that self-myth of the young Russian who learned literary English, translated some of it, was imprisoned for independent literary activities until he was kicked out of Russia and, at the Vienna airport, rescued by a generous American professor-publisher who got him a Midwestern university teaching job for the fall. Soon afterwards, he befriended native literary powerhouses able to give him not just encouragement but substantial rewards.

If Brodsky has actually written any classic poems, I cannot find them in the English translations I have read. (Much reportedly remains untranslated.) I notice that his admirers here are no more sure. While reviewers quote passages from individual poems as il-

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lustrative of something or other, they are reluctant to identify any one of them as great. Brodsky's poems do not appear in anthologies of American poetry, not even Helen Vendler's *Harvard* (1985), which strives to be a compendium of received opinion.

I know of only one American poet colleague who reads his work with pleasure and have thus concluded that it ultimately is no more written for us than for the common reader. Émigré literati I know tell me that his reputation here is based upon tokenism, our publicity machinery rewarding one and only one member of every identifiable minority (e.g., black, Midwestern, etc.); and if Solzhenitsyn is to be America's favorite émigré novelist, so Brodsky has become our token Russian poet, even though other émigrés are equally consequential.

The occasional essays collected in this new book are no more substantial. They range from perfunctory backslapping appreciations of older poets (Derek Walcott, Eugenio Montale) to extended analyses of two poems (one in Russian by Tsvetaeva, the other by W.H. Auden). There is one memoir of his native city, Leningrad, and another of an awful trip to Constantinople. There are brushes at political commentary, but nothing like the political prose of another émigré poet—Czeslaw Milosz's *The Captive Mind* (1953). If Brodsky has read any American poets younger than Robert Lowell, he does not say; it is probably safer for his self-myth (and specialized position) not to. In the end, *Less Than One* has no cohesive subject, other than his own celebrity.

Most of these essays were originally written in English. Those initially in Russian were put into English by Barry Rubin, an otherwise unidentified figure whom Brodsky credits with "editorial counsel" in his last poetry collection, *A Part of Speech* (1980). The principal distinguishing mark of Brodsky's prose is a grandiosity that comes largely from exaggeration and from taking poetry, and language, too seriously. It is a kind of "grand manner" I associate first with poets generations older than himself, especially in Europe (and perhaps accounts for the publicist's image of Brodsky as "cosmopolitan") and then with the illusion that from a grand style necessarily follow great ideas. Consider the book's opening paragraph:

> As failures go, attempting to recall the past is like trying to grasp the meaning of existence. Both make one feel like a baby clutching at a basketball: one's palms keep sliding off.

This last metaphor is a confection inconceivable to me, who has never seen (and cannot imagine) infants ever having the opportunity to clutch inflated *basket*balls. (A *baseball* would be more appropriate.) Now, of course, to impressionable minds, what seems an unnecessary affectation can become more acceptable in those who also can say "I keek it, I vin it." However, in English, such inflated phrasing is indicative of the limited specialist; and within the world of American poetry, Brodsky has never been more than a placekicker, a sideshow import whose praise-winning books appeal particularly to those inclined, alas, to appreciate flashiness over substance.

Richard Kostelanetz is a poet and critic living in New York. His essays on poetry were collected in The Old Poets and the New *(University of Michigan). He is currently completing a critique of literary granting in America.*

REVISIONS

Buckeye Philosopher

Philosophy in the Ivy League has, by and large, been reduced to bickerings over words and pretexts for treason. However, Andrew Oldenquist—perhaps because he grew up and stayed in the Midwest—has retained a firm grasp on the facts of common experience while establishing himself in a discipline. Oldenquist shares his mid-American sanity with his students at Ohio State University and with the readers of books like *The Non-Suicidal Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press; $19.95). Intelligent laymen baffled by the ethical abstractions of John Rawls or Robert Nozick will be pleasantly surprised that they cannot only understand what Oldenquist has to tell them in his new book but that they can also usually agree.

Oldenquist has strayed so far from the academic mainstream that he dares to say the obvious: that man is a tribal creature by nature, that moral order depends irrevocably upon primary commitments to family and local community, and that the modern cult of individualism has wrought havoc everywhere. Drawing upon the work of leading ethnologists and sociobiologists, he traces the global uniformity of ethical principles (even *within* tribes of headhunters) to mankind's "secret Pleistocene Inheritance," the genetic legacy of millennia of evolution during which only fierce group loyalty made human survival possible. The evidence overwhelmingly refutes the notion—prevalent among egalitarians and libertarians—that man behaves egotistically in a primal "state of nature." Only determined ideologues, social workers, public schoolteachers, and Federal judges could break down the natural patterns of domestic order and neighborhood cooperation and so create the war of "all against all" now seen in our inner cities, courts, and schools. (BC)

Back to Barbarism

by Allan C. Carlson

Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision **by Kirkpatrick Sale, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books; $14.95.**

Much of the bioregional vision should appeal to conservative sentiments. As the pitiful remnant of America's agrarian culture again falls victim to drought and depression, the bioregionalists call for a return to the land, a reconstruction of self-sufficient farm life, and a reverence toward the soil as the organic bond of human genera-

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tions. As Ortega y Gasset's revolt of the masses enters its final phase, the bioregionalists stress local self-determination, freedom from the tyranny of mass institutions, and human-scale activities such as potlucks, workbees, and barn dances. In a rootless age, the bioregionalists work toward "reinhabitation," the recovery of a sense of living-in-place, the restoration of community by force of will, the creation of "new natives." Movement leaders even claim as ancestors the anti-industrial regionalists of the old South and the Vanderbilt "Southern Agrarians" of the 1930's.

In truth, though, these are not the children of Calhoun. The movement has more recent origins. The "bioregion" idea was actually born in a 1973 monograph by biologist Raymond Dasmann. He defined the term as an ecologically uniform area where the native species of plants and animals varied by no more than 20 percent. Humans, Dasmann continued, formed natural bonds to such bioregions as they learned to recognize its flora and fauna, to respond to its climatic regime, and to grow familiar with its limits. As another writer from the 1970's put it, bioregions represent "a terrain of consciousness—a place and the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place." Dasmann predicted that if persons could somehow be freed from the tyranny of industrialism and big government, "some new array of ethnobiotic entities would take the place of the existing nation states."

The bioregional idea took root among scattered survivors of the 1960's "counterculture," and dozens of new entities took shape, including Ozarkia, Cascadia, Siskiyou (northern California), and Katuah (the southern Appalachians). Publications with bucolic titles such as *Tilth, Rain, Talking Oak Leaves,* and *Earthbank* wove together the campaign. In May 1984, the first North American Bioregional Congress met in Ozarkia (formerly Missouri), where 200 representatives from 80 bioregions and support organizations carved out a shared agenda. Their platform might best be summarized as ecological anarchism bound to an agrarian romance. The second Congress met this summer in the Great Lakes Bioregion (formerly Michigan) and declared its adherence to a "Green" vision of the future, constructed within the decaying political order.

The antimodernist right, always alert to signs of an authentic back-to-the-land movement, will find any lingering illusions about bioregionalism dispelled by Kirkpatrick Sale's *Dwellers in the Land.* The author—best known as the admiring historian of the Students for a Democratic Society—offers a candid explanation of bioregionalism, revealing its agenda as nothing less than the full destruction of Western Christian civilization.

Sale opens with the image of Gaea, "earth mother" to the Greeks, "a living creature, one and visible, containing within itself all living creatures." Through various contortions of history, he argues that Gaea-styled females have been the natural deities in all healthy human societies and that female goddesses, and probably female priests, were dominant in all early Mediterranean religions. Such female gods brought to their worshipers "a liberating, psychically healthy sense of wholeness, of oneness, of place," and an awareness of being inhabitants within "a world alive."

The corruption, Sale argues, came from "the male-god Indo-Europeans" who invaded the Mediterranean world in 4500 B.C. and imposed male monotheism on the inhabitants. The "old, simple, almost vegetable unity between man and nature" collapsed, and "the poisons" of the male gods took its place. In Greece, he says, the triumph of Zeus over Gaea brought ecological disaster, the fall of the Mycenaeans and the Greek Dark Ages. Sale avoids mention of how the Classical Greeks put their civilization back together but does emphasize the "ecological hubris" of the Romans, "whose cumulative assaults on the Mediterranean ecology were almost certainly a central factor in the collapse of their empire." The worship of male gods and inattention to nature, he says, also brought the destruction of the Sumerians, the Mayans, the T'ang and Han dynasties, and "numerous other imperial peoples who matched the dominance of humans with their dominance of nature."

Then came the peoples of the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—who battled for two millennia to purge most forms of goddess worship. For Sale, though, the Christians were surely the worst. It was they who abandoned Gaea on an unprecedented scale and gave birth to that vilest of abominations: the scientific world view. "Nature was no longer beautiful or scary," he writes, "but merely *there,* not to be worshipped or celebrated, but more often than not to be used . . . *by* humans, *for* humans." Christian Europeans also besoiled the New World, where two continents, "pristine jewels of unimagined glories, were perceived as nothing but empty spaces for unwanted populations, repositories of wanted ores, tracts of trees to fell and fields to plow, virgin territories with no other purpose but to be *worked.*" Then came nationalism, then capitalism, and the world now stands on the brink of another, yet far greater, ecological catastrophe.

What can be done? Sale is clear: the Abrahamic ascendency must be crushed; science abandoned; the American Imperium destroyed. In their place, we must contrive "the modern equivalent of the worship of Gaea," learn that the ecosphere is sacred, and discover "a holy way to comfort her and her work." The beginning of this task is "to become dwellers in the land, to relearn the laws of Gaea" in the immediate place where we live. And that, he says, is bioregionalism.

Disillusioned with Marx and Lenin, it seems, Sale has sought consolation in the arms of discarded ancient deities. The loony confrontation in the film *Ghostbusters* pitting Dan Aykroyd and Bill Murray against a reborn Hittite fertility goddess actually bears an uncanny similarity to Sale's earnest vision of environmental apocalypse and rebirth. That the Sierra Club—respectable if always strident—feels comfortable in publishing a book of this nature is disturbing, symbolic not only of the profoundly dangerous turn that America's environmental movement has taken but also of the true philosophical sickness that afflicts our tired civilization.

Allan Carlson is president of The Rockford Institute.

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Letter From Minneapolis

by Elliot C. Rothenberg

Criminal Chic

The gap between Middle Americans and our cultural elite is nowhere wider than on questions of crime and punishment. While activists on the bench and in academia have crafted ever more rights and privileges for those accused and even convicted of crimes, they have given short shrift to the rights and welfare of current and potential victims. In fact, prosecutors and groups like the ACLU pursue intended victims who exercise self-help against their assailants with a vigor and venom which in a more sensible polity would be directed towards those from whom protection is sought. (I am thinking not only of the tribulations of New York's Bernhard Goetz, but also of the oft-burglarized Miami shopowner Prentice Rasheed, who finally booby-trapped his premises against unwanted intruders—and was prosecuted.) By the manifestation of a perverted sort of noblesse oblige, well-off liberals have anointed lawbreakers as the real victims, victims of the ordinary citizenry's failure to provide enough money for AFDC, food stamps, educational loans, or whatever, and therefore not responsible for their crimes.

What some may consider an exaggerated concern for the interests of violent criminals (suffering from inadequate education and incomes) pales in comparison with the veritable red carpet rolled out for the rich and famous when they decide to flout the law for fashionable causes. Take, for example, the protests at the South African Embassy in Washington, DC, in violation of a law prohibiting demonstrations at foreign diplomatic missions. Of the thousands "arrested," not one has been prosecuted, much less convicted. On the other hand, rabbis demonstrating in the same manner, but at the Soviet Embassy protesting religious persecution, have been jailed for the same offense.

What is probably the nation's longest running series of politically motivated illegal actions continues in Minneapolis. For more than four years, masses of protesters in the hundreds and sometimes thousands have periodically converged upon the international headquarters of Honeywell Inc. and have proceeded to blockade all entrances and exits, preventing employees and visitors from either going in or coming out for up to an entire day. These assemblages are intended to dramatize (and maximize media coverage of) the participants' indignation not only at Honeywell's defense contracts but over other liberal *bete noires*—like aid to the Nicaraguan contras, the Strategic Defense Initiative, and the Reagan Administration's foot-dragging on South African sanctions. Exactly why Honeywell is to blame for all these ills is not immediately obvious.

Why have activists targeted Honeywell, by any reasonable measure, a more "socially conscious" corporation than most? After all, the company has used corporate funds to finance "peace" conferences at the University of Minnesota's Hubert Humphrey Institute. Its chief executive officers have published pro-disarmament articles and have gone out of their way to express sympathy for the objectives of the demonstrators. As if that were not enough, the company is pulling out entirely from South Africa.

Part of the problem is that Honeywell's location is so darned convenient for well-heeled protesters. The company chose not to locate its headquarters in some dreary and remote industrial site, like the facilities of another major Minnesota defense contractor, FMC Corp., which have never been invaded by the "peace" movement. Instead, Honeywell set up shop virtually adjacent to Minneapolis' downtown, with a park on its premises to attract the public. Even more to the point, the complex is only a couple of miles from the city's prime upper-middle-class residential districts and closer still to the most popular area of yuppie gentrification. Led by the usual claque of professional radicals, Minnesota's *haute monde* has taken to blockading Honeywell as an ideal pastime on brilliant Minnesota spring and fall days.

In fact, an inveterate presence and frequent arrestee at these happenings is Erica Bouza, wife of Minneapolis police chief Anthony Bouza, who has become a favorite on the wine-and-brie circuit, a unique accomplishment for a law enforcement officer.

For upwards of three years, Chief Bouza has shown unusual solicitude for the comforts of lawbreakers by providing coffee and doughnuts for those arrested at Honeywell. Mr. Bouza told the local press last April that the illegal blockades were "democracy at its best" and that the hungry and thirsty demonstrators taken into custody "are decent people who are taking part in an act of conscience."

The complaisance of Minnesota's governing establishment only begins with the police chief and extends to the state's highest court. Almost from the beginning, the protesters during these trials have not denied violating state trespass laws but have insisted that the moral superiority of their views on U.S. disarmament and other matters of import should supersede the dictates of the criminal law. The use of this strategem was soon thwarted by a panel of trial judges which ordered that such testimony be excluded from the courtroom as irrelevant to whether a crime had been committed and serving only to appeal to the political and other prejudices of jurors. In an unprecedented decision a few months later, however, the Minnesota Supreme Court threw out the lower court order and ruled that the Honeywell

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defendants could not be barred from exercising what it called their constitutional right to make political appeals to juries and judges. As a result, juries have acquitted many if not most of the Honeywell blockaders even though virtually none have denied encroaching on the company's property and harassing its employees. Those not absolved by juries generally were released with "suspended sentences" by judges.

The arrogation of a privileged status by elite lawbreakers is, of course, a far cry from Henry David Thoreau's and Martin Luther King's philosophy and practice of civil disobedience. Far from eschewing the discomforts of the county jail, both affirmed that those breaking the law must willingly accept the consequences of their illegal conduct.

The organized pampering of the Honeywell lawbreakers, usually a model of efficiency, does occasionally break down, however. After one of her arrests in 1983, Mrs. Bouza had the misfortune of being tried before one of Minneapolis' only conservative judges, a former Republican state party chairman, who sentenced her to 10 days in jail.

More recently, at an October 1986 blockade of Honeywell, the 70 police officers assigned to the demonstration inexplicably did not bring along enough doughnuts to serve all those arrested. In a state of some dudgeon, Mrs. Bouza (one of those not fed) complained to Chief Bouza on behalf of all the protesters so mistreated. Mr. Bouza responded by assigning two high-ranking police officers to investigate. The officers, the deputy chief for patrols and the police department's civil defense coordinator, returned with a report revealing that only 60 doughnuts were procured to begin with and, worse, some policemen had eaten a few. Presumably, the demonstrators will not suffer a similar affront in the future. Mrs. Bouza pronounced herself "partially satisfied."

Quite apart from the farce of it all, the indulgence of the Honeywell blockaders by the ostensible guardians of the rule of law has relegated their victims to the status of forgotten men and women. Neither the Minnesota Supreme Court justices nor the Minneapolis police leadership has deemed worthy of mention the rights of Honeywell employees prevented from entering or leaving their workplace. And they have not been the only victims. Along with the losses suffered by Honeywell and its employees, the demonstrators have saddled local governments with costs for cleanup, police protection, prosecutors, judges, juries, courtrooms, and other public services. Chief Bouza himself has estimated that the costs of a single day's blockade could be as high as $300,000 for Minneapolis taxpayers.

Finally, while the police chief and two top assistants were giving high priority to investigating the now-famous doughnut shortfall, the police department's research arm, with a sense of timing which can only have been divinely inspired, released a report disclosing that serious crimes in Minneapolis had increased by 14 percent over the past year and had gone up for 21 consecutive months.

Far be it to suggest any connection between the highly publicized police and judicial winking at some crimes and the waxing of the rate of others. It is, our betters assure us, just a coincidence.

Elliot C. Rothenberg is president of the North Star Legal Foundation, Minneapolis, and legal affairs editor of Public Research Syndicated.

Letter From College

by Paul Herron

Brown Shirts in the Ivory Tower

The orthodoxy of Reason is proclaimed, archconservative turned archliberal Garry Wills once wrote, and it will have its inquisitors.

He ought to know. Wills perfectly represents a new breed of college utopians who, losing their power to implement their latest brainstorms on a public suspicious of statist panaceas, have turned their collective energies inward, hoping to create an academic Eden for all the Knights of the True Faith, where they can frolic unmolested by capitalism, conservatism, or dissent. As is the case with the Soviet earthly paradise, enforcing the matter has been a messy affair.

I ought to know. As editor of a conservative journal at Northwestern—a typical progressive, enlightened, modern university—I met with a decidedly illiberal hostility from campus liberals, who include the professors, the deans, the departments, the student newspaper, the student government—a seamless web encompassing everyone but the rank-and-file students, who require a tremendous strength of mind to emerge from four years at our scenic indoctrination campus as freethinkers. Unfortunately, my experience is entirely typical.

On the day of our organizational meeting, a reporter was sent by the university-subsidized daily newspaper to join our staff and "find out what those right-wingers are up to" (she sheepishly left the meeting when she saw that she had inadvertently made a confidante of our publisher!). Since then, *The Northwestern Review* has been an *organizatio non grata* at Evanston, Illinois, bastion of free thought. When one of our reporters paid admission to an open conference on militarism, the assortment of campus radicals who sponsored the event ridiculed him, debated whether he should be forcibly ejected, physically intimidated him, and threatened his life. Fortunately, he was able to stand his ground. Our publisher wasn't so lucky. He was physically removed from an "open" meeting of the International Committee Against Racism (InCAR), during which the group's president, an English professor named Barbara Foley, called him a "racist" and a "fascist" in the process of threatening violence against "the fascists." (She was later jailed for assaulting a former member of our umbrella organization, the Conservative Council.) The colorful Ms. Foley had called for "a movement of students who are so turned off by this racist, reactionary publication that they take it upon themselves to stop the publication of *The Review*."

Of course, it is unreasonable to expect that any university would be without its lunatic fringe. Northwestern President Robert Strotz spoke for the mainstream when he said recently that students should be exposed to a "greater diversity of values and aesthetics and political views and past experiences," and that he wanted to give

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students a politically tolerant "environment that is supportive of their coming to decisions about life-styles and political views and religious views that are best suited to them." Despite the profession of these commendable ideals, no action at all was ever taken on behalf of the terrorized conservatives, even after Professor Foley carried out her threat of assault. In that leftist never-never land of academia, free speech is the dearest value and the wellspring of truth—for the left. InCAR stated the ground rules when they shouted down Eldridge Cleaver from a university podium where he was attempting to give a speech: "No free speech for fascists!" Needless to say, Northwestern chose not to censure those responsible for that incident, either.

It *is*, however, possible even for a leftist to traverse the bounds of decorum at the modern university. A postscript to Professor Foley's academic terrorism of the past three years was written this summer when she was denied tenure for an incident in which she stormed the podium where Nicaraguan freedom fighter Adolfo Calero was speaking, threw animal blood on him, threatened to kill him, and incited a mob of kindred spirits from Chicago to storm the stairways of the apartment to which Calero was forced to retreat.

Foley will leave, but she has made her mark, having clarified Northwestern's guidelines for professorial conduct: Publicly slandering students who happen to disagree with you is definitely OK. Assaulting students who happen to disagree with you—still OK. Shouting down public figures who happen to disagree with you—OK. Shouting down *and* threatening the lives of public figures who happen to disagree with you—*not* OK. Until the final episode, Northwestern condoned Professor Foley's escalating spiral of violence, though it really much prefers forms of intolerance that generate less publicity.

The most telling episode in Northwestern's drive to gag conservatives began this spring, when a radical disrupted a speech by Reed Irvine. Unable to get past the first line of his text, Irvine tried to defuse the disruption by offering her the podium. The podium she accepted, and at the podium she held forth, until dragged away, a short eternity later, by the police.

The faculty-student panel charged with handling such matters conducted a Kafkaesque "trial" of the disrupting student, Jill Bloomberg, in which *The Northwestern Review* often seemed to be more on trial than the student. In a circus of brazen procedural and judicial errors, the board, which included a personal friend of Ms. Bloomberg's, examined ominous "fascist trends" at universities worldwide before acquitting Ms. Bloomberg, deeming her heckling (for which she was convicted in Cook County Court of disorderly conduct) "not excessive."

While one arm of the modern university decried fascist trends, another arm, the campus police, prepared an invoice for the conservative group that had invited Mr. Irvine. Billed by campus police for their frequent sallies to restore order and faced with several cancellations by prominent conservatives who are now afraid to speak at Northwestern, student groups on the right can only watch in incredulity as free speech is quietly suffocated.

The situation in the classroom is no less insidious. An archetypical inquisitor for Reason is Northwestern's distinguished Garry Wills himself. In my American culture class, the noted author used "Socratic dialogue" as a means of first venturing his own unique insights on the greatest issues of the day ("Right-wingers really want a nuclear war" or "Most personal hygiene products, including deodorant, are cynical attempts to rob the public") then soliciting opinions from the class. The student cannot go wrong by offering left-wing slogans, no matter how radical or sophomoric. On the other hand, undergraduates who venture conservative opinions are subjected to unrelenting, usually sarcastic denunciations. In the classroom of one of our deans of culture, crimethink is punished by public humiliation.

Perhaps it is unfair, though, to single out Mr. Wills. His mossbacked teaching/indoctrination style is not unusual. It is the new orthodoxy.

Conservative students at Northwestern soon learn that many professors and students dismiss them with a label—racist, fascist, etc.—without even recognizing the sincerity of their opinions. "HAVE YOU GOT ANY MORE RACIAL SLURS WE CAN USE / WE HAVEN'T MESSED WITH NIGGERS LATELY." This, and some even more malodorous specimens of name-calling were maliciously inserted into *Northwestern Review* copy for one of our issues. After we deleted these epithets, more appeared in the final edition. When we reported the incident to the university and the publishing company it subsidizes, neither showed the slightest concern. In matters of tolerance, the "Harvard of the Midwest" has already made it into the mainstream of the Ivy League schools it emulates.

Paul Herron was a founding editor of The Northwestern Review.

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

Raw Bits

Some undigested odds and ends this month. Let's see—let's start with some survey research on regional differences, real and perceived.

From California comes word that the Stanford Research Institute has come up with a typology of Americans based on their (excuse the expression) life-styles. Not surprisingly, the types are not distributed uniformly across the U.S. Three in particular are geographically concentrated. "Achievers" are more likely than others to be wealthy, middle-aged suburbanites in Southern California and the Midwest. (George Babbitt lives!) The "Socially Conscious" tend to be younger, well-educated folk, also financially well-off: They pile up in New England and on the West Coast. "Belongers" make up 37 percent of the U.S. population: They are patriotic, family-oriented, politically conservative, and tend to live—guess where.

Meanwhile, the Roper Poll has been asking Americans how they see regional differences in the U.S. Overall, the West is seen as the "most exciting" region, the prettiest, and the best place to vacation. The Wild Northeast is seen as most dangerous—most cosmopolitan and most expen-

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sive, as well. It is also believed to be where "most of the people who run things" live. Fair enough. The Middle West is regarded as middle-of-the-road—neither best nor worst—in most respects; it does get the "least exciting" title, making it sound more and more attractive the older I get. The South gets credit for the best weather (although last summer we just about dried up and blew away), and its people are seen as the friendliest and most religious. The survey was conducted before the bottom fell out of oil prices, but Roper found that Americans believe the South also has the best job opportunities. Look out, Yankee, Sunbelt's gonna get yo' mama.

Which may have something to do with mini-course 2062: How to Speak Southern, offered by MIT's Laboratory for Nuclear Science. Make of that what y'all will.

* * *

A little North-South parable from *The Anglican Digest* answers the perennial question: Can any good thing come from Arkansas? In Lincoln, Massachusetts (not far from MIT, in fact), a Filipino Sister of St. Anne took her cheap but treasured wristwatch to a jeweler for repairs. "Only an Arkansas tinkerer could repair this," he told her, whereupon she sent it to the parents of a student from Arkansas—and it came back good as new.

* * *

Speaking of the South's friendly and religious people—I don't plan to vote for any TV evangelist for President, but I do admire some of them and defend them occasionally from ignorant criticism. A few Gantryesque specimens, however, make it all too easy for critics of the breed to score. Consider, for example, the allegedly Reverend Jim Whittington of Greenville, North Carolina. Mrs. Mozelle Ussery of LaGrange, Georgia, sick with leukemia, wrote him some time ago, after watching his syndicated television program. According to the AP, he subsequently sent her roughly 30 computer-generated letters. One letter said, "The Lord spoke to me to have you prove yourself by sending an offering of $15 (Malachi 3:10)," and the last one read: "My dear friend Mozelle, you can get in trouble with God and miss your blessing by not being obedient. . . . I don't want your blood on my hands at the Judgement, Mozelle."

Mrs. Ussery was unresponsive because she had died seven months before. Her husband was sufficiently annoyed by the last letter to send copies to several newspapers. Preacher Whittington commented: "I only asked the man for $15, and he's giving me thousands in free advertising."

Far be it from me to urge Federal regulation. Instead, let us pray—for whatever may be appropriate.

* * *

(I promise that the next few paragraphs will be my last comment on the detestable enormities of the U.S. Department of Transportation.)

As I keep reminding you (and myself), resistance to Federal tyranny is not a Southern monopoly. Out in John Wayne country, some state politicos have been aiding and abetting their constituents' contumacy. Last I heard, for instance, legislation was pending in Wyoming, Nevada, and

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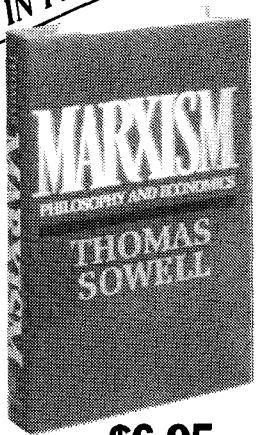

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Montana to reduce the fine for speeding (up to 75 mph) to $1.00, thus technically complying with the Federales' silly 55 mph speed limit while ensuring that no one will be inconvenienced by it.

Unfortunately, it probably won't work. The Feds are making it plain that they intend to cut off highway funds to states that post limits and ignore them. Florida recently got threatened with some proviso about the percentage of drivers who must comply, and the Sunshine State meekly started arresting folks.

To me, this bespeaks a serious failure of the imagination. Regular readers will know that I'm not hog-wild about highways in the first place, but even if we accept the need for them, there are alternatives to the Federal dole (better: make that Dole, after the ex-Tar Heel now in charge of DOT). Back in the bad old days of regional antagonism (about 1968), for instance, Floridians' neighbors in Georgia outlawed studded snow tires. The penalty for this insult to Georgia highways was a $1,000 fine. Most miscreants paid readily enough, since the alternative was a year spent at repairing the damage and at other forms of roadwork under armed supervision.

Of course, the law was just an exaggeration of Georgia's ancient speed-trap tradition, directed at New Yorkers passing through en route to Florida; few Georgians felt the need for snow tires, studded or otherwise. I think the last Yankee who'd made it through Georgia without being stopped was General Sherman; for decades after that, Georgians took care that it didn't happen again.

But the law not only pandered to unworthy xenophobic impulses, it was also a potentially nice little money-maker. I never did hear how much it raised in fines and unreimbursed services, but Florida might want to consider something similar, if the Department of Transportation wants to get nasty about it.

The problem with this approach, of course, is that the quarrel isn't with hapless Northern tourists. For starters, there'd have to be a blanket pardon for Midwestern farmers: those hay shipments during the drought were downright neighborly. But I have an alternative to suggest.

Ask yourself: How do the Federal boys determine how fast Florida drivers are going? Of course. Floridians ought to think about making it illegal for anyone but the state police to operate radar equipment. A few DOT highway engineers on Florida chain gangs would be an edifying spectacle. Even if their fines didn't make up for the Federal money cut off, it might be worth it. *Sic semper tyrannis.*

John Shelton Reed drives 55—give or take a little—but believes in the First Amendment right to high-speed self-expression.

Letter From the Southwest

by Odie Faulk

The Return of Professor X

In 1973, at the tag end of the riots and disruptions of the late 1960's and early 1970's, he ventured into print with a small volume entitled *This Beats Working for a Living: The Dark Secrets of a College Professor.* He did this under the pseudonym "Professor X" not to hide his identity (this he readily admitted on national and regional television, radio interviews, and numerous stories in newspapers). Rather, the pseudonym was meant to lend an air of humor to ramblings, musings, and observations about antics in the high groves of academe. The volume was meant as satire—humor with the bite of truth.

The reaction was swift, for apparently he had touched an exposed nerve. Today there still are academicians who explode in outraged anger when this book is mentioned, particularly those who received anonymous copies with selected passages underlined, the gift of students—or colleagues.

The following year this same author demonstrated his complete lack of wisdom by repeating his folly with a second Professor X volume, this one entitled *Never at a Loss for an Opinion.* He dedicated it "To my friends, the two I have left."

What followed the publication of these two books was curious. The author received telephone calls from a dozen and more professors at various campuses to ask, "When did you teach at the University of Minnesota?" or Washington? or Texas? As Professor X had written, the malaise of that era touched every campus equally, and the frauds and pretensions and hypocrisy of bad professors, which he had estimated at 75 percent of the total, were not confined to the Midwestern A&M college where he taught, but rather were universal. His message was that professors were human and thus as subject to frailty and foible as everyone else but that they refused to admit this; instead, they huffed and puffed about with much hypocrisy. In short, he said the emperor had no clothes.

Years later, he was told by the president of that A&M school that when these books appeared, his vice president for academic affairs had said of Professor X, "Let's get rid of him. He's a troublemaker." In 1977, after a change of presidents, Professor X was asked to resign from that institution, which he did despite the tenure he had been awarded. He had maintained in the Professor X books that tenure was a sadly abused system and that he believed anyone paying his salary had a right to ask for his resignation. When it was asked, he resigned, saying, "To have done anything else would have made a lie of everything I have stood for."

And when his resignation was requested by the administration, there was no murmur of protest from his colleagues or from the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors. There was only a collective sigh of gratitude that he no longer would disgrace their campus with his conservative thought and his laughter at their pretensions.

Now comes a footnote to the episode of Professor X. The story I here relate was told to me by a retired member of the department in which Professor X taught at that Midwestern A&M college. I have no documents to footnote the story, only an eyewitness account, but there is an unmistakable ring of truth to it.

Recently this A&M school advertised nationally for a director of minority studies and at the conclusion of the search hired a black woman with a freshly minted Ph.D. in history,

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earned at a prestigious institution in the northern Midwest. However, when she arrived on campus to assume her duties, she stunned the administration by announcing that she had no interest in directing minority studies. Rather, she demanded to profess in the department of history.

The administrators at this A&M college already were smarting under chastisement by bureaucrats from Washington because this rural aggie school had too few hyphenated Americans on its faculty; therefore the institution faced the threat of curtailed Federal dollars unless the situation changed rapidly. Thus they felt obliged to give in to the demands of their new colleague to prevent her from leaving.

The decision made by the administrators of this A&M school was conveyed to the chairman of the department of history by the dean of arts and sciences: "I'm sending over an assistant professor for your faculty."

After the situation was completely explained to the history department chairman, he asked the one question that seemed to matter to him at a time of budgetary austerity, "Where will her salary come from?"

"Don't worry," the dean assured him, "my office will pick up her salary *this year.*"

The dean's meaning was clear. The history department, which had a professor retiring the following year, would have to use those dollars to pay the salary of their new colleague. In effect, this meant the department would have no say in hiring a replacement for the retiree.

A few days later, the members of this history department were invited to a reception to meet their new fellow history professor. Not one of them asked about departmental integrity in hiring—or even about the demands of affirmative action that any position be widely advertised, that applications be taken by a departmental committee, that three candidates be selected and invited to the campus to read a paper demonstrating academic worthiness, and then that the department vote on which of the three to hire.

There likewise was not a murmur about their new colleague's particular field of competence, Russian history. Already this department had two Russian historians. Now it had three to teach the one or two classes offered each semester in this area—while other needed areas were neglected.

Nor yet was there complaint about the salary being paid their new colleague—which was higher than most associate professors in the department were receiving.

This episode proved a painful paradox for the members of this history department. Like most historians, they wanted to consider themselves part of the mainstream of liberalism, and thus they favored preferential treatment for blacks and females. Yet as card-carrying members of the academic profession, they believed in departmental autonomy in hiring rather than having new colleagues forced on them by administrators. Moreover, most of them reacted in knee-jerk disagreement with administrators on every issue, seeing their relationship as adversarial. Had their new colleague been a white male, the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors would have rung the tocsin and shouted for the faithful to throw up barricades in front of the Administration Building.

In this one situation can be seen the painful dilemma of this brave new academic age facing the faithful. And in it can be seen the moral bankruptcy of today's university campuses, particularly in the liberal arts.

If someone gathered in book form every abuse and fraud perpetrated in the name of expediency in the face of Federal demands, it would make a large, sad volume—and no doubt cause the compiler to be read out of the ranks of his profession. His resignation would be demanded by an outraged administration and faculty. There would be no call for due process or for justice. Lynch law would prevail.

Apparently every professor now shares the inheritance of Professor X, which is that academia truth does not set anyone free; rather, it results in cries of death for the messenger.

Odie Faulk is author of Arizona: A Short History *(University of Oklahoma Press) and of other standard volumes of Southwestern history.*

A·r·t·i·F·a·c·t·s

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On 'Guns, Butter, and Guilt'

Your review of my book, *To the Edge*, in the February '86 issue of *Chronicles* has only now been brought to my attention, and I do want you to know how deeply I appreciate your comments.

Your critic (Lee Congdon), in his "Guns, Butter, and Guilt" article, said everything I could wish and hope for about the meaning of the book. Yes, I do see National Socialism as the manifestation of the nihilistic instincts that are always lurking beneath the thin crust of civilization and that were first let loose by the Jacobins during their reign of terror, and I do believe that it is the sacrifice of the few which redeems the many.

The question of collective responsibility and collective guilt is, of course, complicated. Frankly, I believe that as individuals we can only be held guilty of things which we ourselves have done or which we have failed to prevent if we had the chance to prevent them.

Of course, we all feel tainted by terrible things done in our name—but guilty? I am thinking of the victims of Yalta, of the two million people who were turned over to their murderer Stalin. Surely we are all sickened by the thought, but we know—every one of us, I trust!—that we would have never consented had we been asked. Guilty as individuals? No.

Lee Congdon's article as a whole is really like a breath of fresh air. It says so much that one hopes to hear; it does away with all those silly clichés we have been hearing far too long; it stands for right reason and common sense.

—*Kay Heriot*

On 'Plain People'

Your editorial on "Plain People" (*Chronicles*, November 1986) makes excellent sense to me as an argument for personal correspondence. Why listen to our "literary betters," those few among us who have access to the podium of the press, when we can talk to each other through letters?

It's clear that what we write to each other in letters, or at least 99 percent of it, isn't fit for publication. The harebrained, obnoxious, and unbearably trivial far outweigh all the rest that we scrawl between the Dear and the Yours truly. In this, we're right up there with Hank Jr.

But like you say about him and Charlie Daniels and Merle, plain people do manage to get in their licks of sense. We get enough into our plain, mostly trivial, everyday letters to make up for many shortcomings, and more than enough to make up for what we miss by not attending too seriously to the professional writing of our betters.

"Jerkwater America," as you say, can't fight the great cultural institutions of our time, and so many of us "have quietly walked away." Many of us, indeed, now attend more to the homespun writing we send to each other through the mail than to the second- and third-class material sent down from the heights of the public press.

While I am writing this letter I think of our past.

Sing it, Merle.

—*Steve Sikora*
Albany, California

You aptly lament the lack of influence ordinary people have had on modern culture, but Zbigniew Fitz's drawing says it all. Ascendancy holds minimum priority for us plain folk: We are too busy providing food, inspiration, and tax funds for the nonplain set.

Plain people spend an inordinate amount of time at hopelessly plain endeavors like fishing, gardening, prayer, bringing up the next generation, and just plain keeping on. This leaves little time for loftier pursuits, such as debating whether some long-dead philosopher was a sodomite or a parasite. These higher questions must be left for less cumbered souls to ponder.

That's not to say we are without our transcendent moments. I have a plain acquaintance who ventures a landscape now and then, but the paintings' subjects always seem to be plainly perceivable at first view—disqualifying them, of course, as true culture. I even know a plain poet or two, but plain speaking—especially if it's in metered rhyme—can't really be taken seriously by higher minds. (Unfortunately, higher minds can't take the price of wheat seriously either, but that's another matter.)

As long as the moguls of culture continue to convince large numbers of people that plainness and ordinariness are always blemishes, and ambiguity and innovation are always virtues, they will maintain their oligarchy. Truth is, though, as far as many of us plain folk are concerned, they can keep it. We have our hands full these days just maintaining our ordinary status.

—*Charlotte Wilcox*
Harris, Minnesota

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SCREEN

The Glory and the Myth of John Ford

by Arthur M. Eckstein

John Ford: A Biography by Andrew Sinclair, New York: Ungar; $10.95.

John Ford: The Man and His Films by Tag Gallagher, Berkeley: University of California Press; $35.00.

A year ago, the University of Maryland held a special screening of John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), followed by a two-hour discussion of the film led by representatives of the departments of history, English, philosophy, and communications. John Ford would have been publicly contemptuous of this attention from the egghead professors. In private, he probably would have been delighted.

Ford (John Martin Feeney, 1895-1973) was a complicated, deeply divided man. He was the greatest of all American film directors: close to 100 films, starting in 1917, from two-reelers to three-hour epics, from silents to sound, from black and white to Technicolor and then Cinemascope. He was disdainful of his six Oscars—but prominently displayed them. He called himself just a hardworking mercenary—yet suffered recurrent bouts of nausea at premieres. He carefully constructed for himself a macho image based on hard drinking, poker playing, and often cruel roughhousing; yet, he was an intellectual and a voracious reader, and during the Depression he secretly disbursed money to the needy.

Ford led the fight against the Hollywood Blacklist (publicly taking on C.B. De Mille in one famous incident)—though his best friend, the actor Ward Bond, was the leading Red-hunter and though his own films reflect a deep social conservatism. He supported the terrorist IRA throughout his life (even funneling large sums of money to them). Yet from about 1921 he was also involved secretly in U.S. Naval Intelligence, and he was a founding member of the OSS (forerunner of the CIA). He voted for Goldwater in 1964—and for Nixon thereafter. Refused admission to Annapolis as a young man, he was an authentic war hero in the Second World War and retired an admiral (a lifetime goal).

This last accomplishment gives but one indication of Ford's fierce ambition. His savage sibling rivalry with his elder brother Francis (a famous early director who first invited him out to Hollywood in 1914) makes painful reading even now. Francis, at first domineering, ended up a bit player in John's movies. Again, though the youngest (and most fragile) child in a family of Irish immigrants, John married high on the social ladder: a Southern lady whose ancestral plantation had been burnt by Sherman and whose uncle was Chief of Naval Operations. The Herculean force of Ford's ambitions was, however, mitigated by his tenderness and need for human warmth.

Ford lived and worked surrounded and protected by trusted buddies: Ward Bond, George O'Brien, Will Rogers, and (though he considered him something of a lummox) John Wayne. The deaths of friends (Will Rogers, Harry Carey, Tom Mix) absolutely devastated him. Nevertheless, given his own personality, it is not surprising that Ford saw human nature as deeply flawed. He sometimes gave his middle name as Augustine. Like so much of what he said about himself, this was untrue; but Ford certainly shared Augustine's view of the City of Man, as well as his belief that only religious faith held out any hope of human redemption.

Ford the man is a fit subject for study, though his movies, of course, are what is truly important about him, for they have done much to create Americans' image of their own past. The two books under review offer differing perspectives on the man and his work. The biography of Ford by Andrew Sinclair is decently written and for the first time brings out the full range of Ford's intelligence activities (a fascinating story). But oddly enough, it is Tag Gallagher's book—more concerned with the movies than with Ford himself—that turns out to contain the most precise scholarship on Ford's life. It is Gallagher who finds witnesses to the crucial psychological impact of Ford's struggle against—and victory over—his elder brother Francis (proving that this isn't mere pop psychoanalysis); it is Gallagher who brings to light the full extent of Ford's torrid love affair with Katharine Hepburn, as well as several lesser imbroglios (Sinclair characterizes Ford as basically an ideal father and husband); it is Gallagher, even, who finally discovers Ford's true name.

Much more could be cited along these lines, and one only wishes that, like Sinclair, Gallagher had organized his research on Ford the man into one coherent narrative. Unfortunately, Gallagher's often pioneering discussions of Ford as a person appear instead like so many scattered, refreshing waterholes in the vast desert of his film criticism. And the book *is* basically film criticism, not biography—film criticism of the most "modern" sort. Therein lies the rub.

First, Gallagher's ideas are expressed in the sort of language now *de rigeur* in criticism of all types: a hideous mix of deconstructionism and

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technical film jargon. The reader must repeatedly endure sentences like these: "The Gary and Marty scenes are played on a high level of spontaneous ingenuousness typical of Ford's experimental representationalism. . . . Naturally this comedic style seems more artificial than the grim, sculptural *verismo*." (Would anyone care to define "representationalism," let alone "*experimental* representationalism"? Gallagher does not. As for "sculptural *verismo*"—I won't even ask.)

Second, Gallagher's critical taste often seems as eccentric as his writing, and some discussions are incredibly self-indulgent: 18 pages spent on *The Sun Shines Bright* (1953), an essentially minor remake of *Judge Priest* (1934), which has already received its own detailed analysis; 30 pages spent on a scene-by-scene recounting of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962). These movies—and others, like the obscure *Pilgrimage* (1933)—Gallagher considers the essential Ford: dark, expressionistic stuff with barely a real outdoors scene. *Mogambo* (1954)—*Mogambo!*—receives far more attention than either *They Were Expendable* (1945) or *3 Godfathers* (1948). As Gallagher is several times forced to admit, his interpretations and his evaluations of Ford's work would not suggest themselves to the ordinary viewer.

But if John Ford has continuing cultural importance—if, indeed, he is a central cultural figure of post-World War II America—it is because of his naturalistic outdoor epics. These begin with the huge, silent *The Iron Horse* (1924—barely mentioned by Gallagher), and continued through *Stagecoach* (1939) to the great populist masterpieces of the late 40's: *Fort Apache* (1948), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), *Rio Grande* (1950). These latter movies, eternally fresh and exhilarating to the viewer (I can personally attest to their impact even on a cynical Berkeley audience), Gallagher dismisses as crowd-pleasing minor works that made money.

Moreover, insofar as Gallagher has a good word to say about these movies, it is because he sees them as subversive, undermining and exploding the myth of the American military. His treatment of *Fort Apache* is typical. Gallagher alleges that by showing Colonel Owen Thursday (Henry Fonda) as a virtually insane martinet whose famous charge was in fact a massacre, Ford destroys the honor of the regiment, which he shows John Wayne (as Thursday's successor) upholding in the last scene in his lies to Eastern reporters. Gallagher has missed the point. Ford was a patriot, but no naive one. His own experiences in the Second World War had brought home to him the often suicidal stupidity of the military (his documentary on Pearl Harbor had been suppressed). Nevertheless, for Ford the good *outweighs* the (acknowledged) evil, and so the institution must be upheld. Herein lies the theme of *Fort Apache*.

Gallagher is able to recognize Ford's social conservatism when portrayed, as in the beautiful *The Quiet Man* (1952), in a village in Ireland. Here, Innisfree and all its social strata are depicted in loving detail by Ford, though the narrow-minded, repressive aspects of the village's culture are not ignored, and the theme of the film is in fact the *socialization* (that is, his *acceptance* of the village traditions) of the returned American Sean Thornton (John Wayne). It is a process that leads, under Ford's approving eye, to a cheerful ending. But in *Fort Apache*, Wayne is *again* socialized, this time to the ideal of duty as taught by Colonel Thursday, and in *Yellow Ribbon* and *Rio Grande*, Wayne (now portraying an older man) is sympathetically depicted as himself the transmitter of (military) tradition to youth. Gallagher's fashionable antimilitarism prevents him from seeing that Ford's Augustinian view of Innisfree applies as well to the military and its problems: He forgets that Ford, after all, was an admiral.

Thus Ford validates myth and shows us the process by which the (often terrible) facts are transfigured into legends celebrating the community: a necessary thing, though sometimes a sad one. Ford was steeped in historical learning about the 19th century, but it is typical that before filming he would play Victorian *songs* over and over: He wanted to recapture not the facts but the *mood*. Similarly, his movies are consciously based on Victorian paintings (especially those of Frederic Remington) that were highly mythologized.

The actual links with historical reality are therefore not as important to Ford as the beauty of the image. The Gunfight at the O.K. Corral, which climaxes *My Darling Clementine* (1946), provides a case in point. Ford actually knew Wyatt Earp personally: During the 20's Earp, escaping from his nagging wife in Pasadena, used to come to drink and play cards at Ford's house in Hollywood. Reviewers assumed (and Ford never disabused them of the assumption) that the version of the O.K. Corral in *Clementine* was therefore pretty close to historical reality. It is not: Ford clearly filmed it for the sake of the dreamlike vision of Henry Fonda as Earp disappearing into the cloud of desert dust, to have it out unseen with pistols against the Clantons (in reality, everybody carried shotguns). Ford, from beginning to end, was an Irish poet. That is his glory.

But, it ought to be emphasized, Ford's glory is not his alone: Movie-making is, above all, a *collaborative* enterprise. Ford was a great photographer and a great commander of actors, but to his great frustration he was a failure as a writer of screenplays (he satirized himself about this in *The Wings of Eagles*); and so he had to work from other people's scripts. In public, Ford could sometimes act cavalierly with scripts, even tearing them up with glee before his actors. But this is mostly (again) a constructed *persona*: Gallagher shows that Ford generally followed scripts closely (the changes were matters of emphasis). Not enough credit for Ford's great work in the late 40's and 50's has gone to the screenwriter on whom he constantly relied in this period: Frank S. Nugent.

Starting in 1948, Nugent produced for Ford the screenplays of *Fort Apache*, *3 Godfathers*, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *Wagon Master*, *The Quiet Man*, *The Searchers*, *The Rising of the Moon*, *The Last Hurrah*, *Two Rode Together*, and *Donovan's Reef*. This is simply an extraordinary achievement; at the least, Nugent deserves recognition as coauthor of the Fordian mythology of America that emerged in these years. The point is proven by comparing Ford's work in his great period with his work done in the 30's, when his constant screenwriter was Dudley Nichols: These films are visually more expressionistic (i.e.,

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less beautiful) and socially more acrid and unaccepting. That Ford's word in the postwar period was a collective effort has long been accepted in the sense that he created a "John Ford stock company" of actors with whom he was totally comfortable and whom he constantly used: John Wayne, Ward Bond, Victor McLaglen, Maureen O'Hara, Ben Johnson, Harry Carey Jr. Nugent should be added, in a very prominent place, to this list of inspired performers. Perhaps he even deserves a biography of his own.

The effect of geniuses like Ford and Nugent is shown if you compare Alan LeMay's original novel *The Searchers* with the movie they made of it. The book is now back in print, but for those who only know the movie, it is a disappointment: surreal, lacking in historical detail and flavor, a mere sketch of an idea. What Ford and Nugent did was to darken the main character, Ethan Edwards. In the movie, Ethan is looking for his niece, his only surviving relative, kidnapped by Comanches—looking for her in order to kill her. This was John Wayne's greatest role: a brooding, sullen racist who redeems himself only at the very end of the film, and then only partly. How different is the book, where the optimistic speech on inevitable progress in the harsh land, given in the movie to Mrs. Jorgensen ("she used to be a schoolteacher, you know"), actually belongs to Ethan Edwards himself! By creating an altogether bleaker and more formidable Ethan Edwards, Ford (and Nugent) raises him to truly mythic dimensions: the Hero as Outsider. Wayne named one of his sons Ethan.

Five years after *The Searchers*, a later, much better novel by LeMay was made into a movie. *The Unforgiven* is a brilliant book, an utterly convincing recreation of the Texas frontier of 1874—and the result is a long, dull film directed by John Huston. The difference between the two films shows the difference between an inspired group of people (those around John Ford) and a group of mere journeymen. Ford and his people took a rather mediocre property, discerned the classic that it *might* be, and brought that classic to the surface; Huston and company took a far better original property and dissipated its power. (*The Unforgiven* is the mirror image of *The Searchers*: It deals with an Indian girl who is brought up by whites, and what happens when her Kiowa relatives come searching for her. With Ford—and Nugent—it would have made a great film.)

But because it remains true that *The Searchers* is one of John Ford's most personal films, we must return to the question of *his* creativity and vision. First, it should be remembered that the aging Ford made this movie after a period of terrible personal trauma: a serious stomach operation, an eye operation that left him blind for weeks, the loss of his home of 35 years (bulldozed to create a parking lot for the Hollywood Bowl!), artistic failure on the set of *Mr. Roberts* and bitter withdrawal from that picture. Second, Ford himself called *The Searchers* "a psychological epic," and its final scene is famous: Ethan Edwards, having rescued his niece (and not killed her), brings her back home, but while all the other characters enter the house, Ethan remains silhouetted in the doorway, gripping his left arm with his right hand; at last, he turns away from the doorway and wanders out into the heat and the dust. Why doesn't Ethan enter the house, return to the community? Partly it must be punishment for his racism (an issue about which Ford felt very strongly).

But in reality, Ethan's racism, as Ford makes clear, only masks a deeper psychological trauma: The Comanches did what Ethan had *wanted* to do. They destroyed his brother's family. For at the beginning of the film (the book is far more unclear) Ethan is depicted in love with his brother's wife, and his return to the family ranch from the Civil War makes everyone uneasy. The theme of harsh conflict between brothers sounds familiar. Moreover, while the image of Wayne gripping his left arm is partly a reference to Ford's old friend Harry Carey (it was Carey's "signature"), the fact is that Ford himself had been seriously wounded in the left arm during the battle of Midway, and it constantly bothered him.

It may be, then, that the haunting image of Wayne standing in the doorway holding his arm, only to walk away, originates in the deepest levels of Ford's psyche. But in any case, Ford's closest friends had known all

FORTY YEARS AGAINST THE TIDE

Congress & the Welfare State

by Senator Carl T. Curtis and Regis Courtemanche

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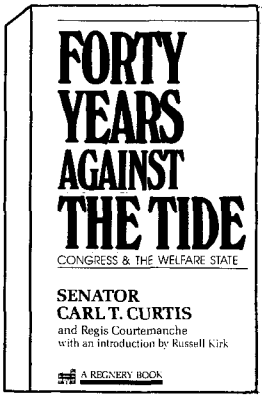
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along that he was the Hero as Outsider (things just got worse as he got older). The Irish camaraderie, the drinking and roughhousing within the small, warm group, was forced—a mask. Ford's real idea of a good time was solitary reading, alone out on his boat. As usual, it is Gallagher who comes up with the crucial evidence, the testimony of Ford's longtime friend, the actor Frank Baker: "He was never relaxed, never mellow, never allowed you to relax either. He was always unhappy. He never had a day's happiness. Will he find peace? Lonely spirit! What was he looking for?"

Well, the whole world is full of neurotics. But few American artists have equaled John Ford's impact: With the help of his collaborators, he established America's vision of its own past, from *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) to *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964)—and not just a vision, but an emotion, a celebration of community and tradition. If the fiercely secretive Ford was also secretly a tormented man, he was not the first Irish poet, nor the last, to transmute inner torment into lasting artistic achievement.

Arthur Eckstein is professor of history at the University of Maryland.

Pins in the Carpet

by Katherine Dalton

***Dancing in the Dark*; screenplay by Leon Marr from the novel by Joan Barfoot; directed by Leon Marr; New World Pictures.**

The Stratford Festival Theatre in Ontario has been training and cultivating great actors for years now—William Hutt, Maggie Smith, Brian Bedford, Marti Maraden, Alan Scarfe, and Martha Henry have all done beautiful work—probably some of their best—there. However, with the slight exception of Smith, none have made the transition to film. So to find Martha Henry starring in a new Canadian movie was a great and pleasant surprise.

Dancing in the Dark is director Leon Marr's feature film debut and a variation on the theme of "diary of a mad housewife." In it Martha Henry plays Edna, a woman who has devoted her life to her not unkind but somewhat boorish businessman of a husband. She is a woman of single purpose and few friends, spending her time cleaning house, cooking, and waiting for Harry to come home.

When the inevitable phone call comes relating Harry's equally inevitable adultery, Edna falls to pieces. The movie cuts between scenes of before and after, from Edna at home (dusting the very antennae on the television set and ironing even her underwear) to Edna in the hospital, where she has been placed by the court following her breakdown and her husband's death. The script is sometimes overblown but not without subtlety, and if the whole movie runs a little too closely along the lines of a feminist stereotype, it is everywhere redeemed by Henry's performance. After the call comes, the phone drops from her hand, and Henry as Edna sits motionless in her chair as the day turns to dusk and then darkness, tears streaming down an expressionless face. There is no onion held furtively just out of camera range here; 30 long years of training and technique are behind the performing of that scene. It is agonizing and beautiful to watch, and a scene that demonstrates so well that Henry has few equals.

"The alarming thing to me," says Henry, who is in New York just for the day, "was that playing Edna didn't touch me at all. She felt just exactly the way I didn't feel, and *that* was what was so scary." It is not so much that Edna has chosen to be a housewife, something Henry as an actress (hence working woman) and feminist finds hard to understand—what is terrifying about Edna is that she has nothing else. She has no resources; no child, no evident other family, no real friends, no outside interests of any kind, nothing so much as a goldfish that is separate and hers alone. Without Harry there is only a void. "I loved him for giving me a life," Edna says, and when he shatters her life, she takes his: four robotic stabs with a kitchen knife.

Love, or at least some kinds of love, are very greedy. Edna has given everything she can to a man who never asked for it all, perhaps, but who readily accepted it; the bargain was struck, then, and in return he had to give her the requisite parts of himself—praise, solicitude, a little time chatting over dinner, fidelity. Edna doesn't need any more, but she can't survive with less, or so she has made herself believe. But Edna the meticulous balustrade cleaner is not the real woman. The real woman is the mad woman in the hospital, silent in her efforts to deal with a flood of thoughts that had been damned up in her head for years and years, filling notebooks with bitter observations in a perfect script.

Henry says what she sees when watching her performance reminds her of her mother, now in a hospital in Michigan. Henry's mother was not a housewife, but like Edna she spent her life making those around her happy and comfortable. "This was her job," Henry says. "What I see now is a woman who doesn't have to do that any more, because nobody cares whether she's charming or not. In fact, the less charming she is, the more likely she is to get somebody to help get her out of bed, or look after her. So I guess that's what I see. Somebody with it stripped off."

Thus peeled, Edna is more real than she has ever been and also unreal—there is always something unbelievable about a broken mind. But she isn't playacting; she is finally not playacting. She was always shattered. "There must have been pins in the carpet that I did not see. . . . I'm sure I could have been perfect," she continues, "with more effort." Henry flies north tonight to return home; Edna we have left back in the theater, finally acting out the one fantasy she seems to have ever had. In her hospital gown she is dancing around and around in the twilight—"trying," as Henry put it, "to become a human being, against impossible odds."

Katherine Dalton writes from New York.

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Bach at the Barricades

by Dale Volberg Reed

Reprise: The Extraordinary Revival of Early Music **by Joel Cohen and Herb Snitzer, Boston and New York: Little, Brown; $25.00.**

In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, as far as I can tell, people played only contemporary music. Since then, it seems, there has been a complete turnaround, and only contemporary music is *not* stylish. Beginning in the 18th century, interest in old music has developed gradually, erratically, but inexorably, despite some resistance from musicians and music-lovers.

Throughout the 19th century, the past was a source of inspiration in the arts, from Greek revival furniture and architecture, through Gothic revival, through the Anglo-Catholic revival in the Anglican church (which encouraged old church music as well as old liturgy, vestments, and architecture), to the Rococo revival, and even to revivals of revivals ("Centennial revival" furniture, a hopeless mixture of styles from the past). The works of the past were, however, viewed through a definitely contemporary lens.

In music, the text had never been the last word for performers. The Baroque composers simply wrote notes, and not even all of those. Training and good taste were supposed to guide performers in the elaboration of those texts. In the 19th century, composers' marks became more detailed but were still treated as guidelines. Editors freely added tempo marks, dynamics, and articulation without concern for identifying their additions as such. Performance traditions, usually transmitted from teacher to student rather than codified in textbooks, were equally susceptible to distortion. Within remarkably few generations, knowledge of earlier performance practices had faded.

Opposing forces were at work, however, particularly in Germany, where the discipline of musicology was burgeoning, producing, for example, elegant, scholarly editions of Bach. University curricula began to include early music and to encourage student performances. A few concert artists began to be interested in how early music had originally been played and to perform it in public.

During the 20th century, both scholarship and performance of early music have gradually progressed. The 1950's saw a flood of important books and editions. For those of us who were not scholars, a shocking lag often separated the publication of these books and our discovery of them. The work of the musicologists took years to affect the commercial music publishing industry, and even longer to reach pedagogical literature. Even in the 1950's and early 1960's, when I was a student, we usually played from old editions in which editorial alterations were indistinguishable from the composer's marks. We rarely discussed editions, buying whatever was in stock. Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, and even Chopin were all published in heavily edited disguises. Now small-town piano teachers like me routinely buy urtexts when possible and worry about choosing the most scholarly editions for students. We ask questions about articulation and style that did not occur to us a few years ago. We are more likely to offer our students choices, or even dilemmas, than to say, "Play it this way." We are, to be honest, often uncomfortable with our ignorance and rarely confident of our solutions. I, for one, however, find the exhilaration of the process outweighs the discomfort of the uncertainty.

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Reprise: The Extraordinary Revival of Early Music is an odd, hybrid book with the admirable goal of "showing real people making music." The first half is text, general chapters on the history and development of the movement and chapters devoted to specific heroes: Arnold Dolmetsch, Noah Greenberg, Thomas Binkley, the Harnoncourts, the Kuijken brothers, Frans Brüggen, and Gustav Leonhardt. The second half is photographs (some elegant, some pedestrian) of people mentioned in the text. This section seems like a cross between a high-school yearbook and a fan magazine. I think only dedicated fans will find it a compelling reason to own the book. The text, written by Joel Cohen, head of the Boston Camarata, will be of interest to a larger group of people.

I assumed that I would like this book, written by a respected performer in a field which fascinates me and which has changed the way I teach and play. From the beginning, however, I found it annoying in several ways. The prose, for example, is both coy and casual and often quite purple. Cohen seems to have assumed that his first choice of words would suffice. After the first page, I began to watch for offensive words and phrases. He was cute: "We are, of course, aware that the dulcian and the isorhythmic motet are no longer the common household objects they never were. . . . " His phrases jarred: "the now plethoric discography," "living actualizations of many masterpieces," "to autofinance his own orchestra." Occasionally, particularly toward the ends of chapters, his prose became positively lurid: "As the twentieth century lurches and heaves toward its final decade, uncertain whether life or death is its goal, every sign of hope and renewal has more than ordinary importance."

As I read, small annoyances began to be overshadowed by major doubts about the book's underlying assumptions. I often stopped reading altogether while I puzzled out my reactions to casual generalizations. Cohen sees the early music revival too simply as part of the modernist rebellion in the arts in the early 20th century. The terms he uses to describe this rebellion reflect a crude view of society in which the traditionally trained musician and the ordinary concert-goer are ignorant, narrow-minded, and moved by the worst possible motives. He describes the avant-garde as a reaction to "the malaise in our cultural establishment," "the deadening effects of too much standardization and repetition on our creative spirit," and "the dominant values of the concert world." They rejected a "quasi-religious reverence toward a fossilized musical repertoire." It is ironic that he also describes the attraction of early music in the language of religious rebirth: "There is something in the depths of the early music repertoire that invites us to change our values, to alter our lives. . . . If you give it a chance, the music of the distant past will turn you around and make you a different person." Early music has "created a psychic space for self-affirmation."

Clearly there was an element of justifiable rebellion in the early music revival, and like any rebellion, it often met with rejection, though (as I have tried to show) it also met with appreciation and acceptance. If Cohen's attitude is representative of the movement, it practically demanded rejection. Listen to the arrogance behind his imaginative reconstruction of the effect of the early music movement: "a threat to the local music teachers . . . " "Too risky for a conservative music school!" The early musician "will corrupt the youth and give them wrong ideas of what great music is supposed to sound like! She will tamper with our most precious cultural relics; she will make them unfamiliar again! And by making those relics unfamiliar, she will rob them of their quasi-liturgical power. I told you those damn fiddle players were a bunch of atheists!"

Secure in their own salvation, early music specialists were perhaps not very diplomatic. To derogate what conservatory musicians have been taught by teachers they love about music they love is to invite distrust if not hostility. Several years ago I was told by a member of the piano faculty of a major university, "None of us [pianists] dares to play Bach anymore." On the other hand, I know students at a conservatory which simply ignores the early music movement who happily play Bach on modern instruments, with love and great beauty. Neither the pianists nor the conservatory students have benefited from the early music revival, perhaps because of the way the movement presented itself.

Cohen's scathing descriptions of traditionally trained musicians are enough to make one marvel, even though he may simply be reflecting pervasive cultural stereotypes: "For every Theresa Stich-Randall there were battalions of imperial sopranos anxious to turn Bach and Handel into offensive weapons against the clients in the last row." Because of the early music revival, "'tenderness of expression' has replaced the philosophy of frontal assault." After admitting the need for humility, he says, "I am not trying to bring back the bad old days. I make no case for the thumping pianist, the megalomaniac conductor, or the glass-shattering concert soprano."

This book does the early music revival and musicians in general a major disservice. Cohen feels that early musicians are morally superior: "Rarely does one find such sincerity and dedication in the commercial concert circuit." My experience has been less extensive, but very different. For years I have attended master-classes and workshops with concert performers. Almost without exception, they live to serve the music. Some are arrogant, some not, but for almost all, the music comes first, and dedication is part of the job description. Cohen's denigration of commercial concert artists seems unnecessary. You would think he was describing a lost cause, not a triumph.

Looking back on the book, the pervasive attitude of denigration is what I remember most—not Cohen's graceful and tolerant descriptions of the real visionaries of the movement, not his intelligent appreciation of the role of amateurs in the movement, not his genuine knowledge and perception about the music itself. Careless assumptions, careless prose, and careless hyperbole have turned a potentially fine book into a mediocre one. This is a book to borrow from the library.

Dale Volberg Reed is a piano teacher, an amateur harpsichordist, and a choir singer who has played and sung a reasonable amount of reasonably old music.

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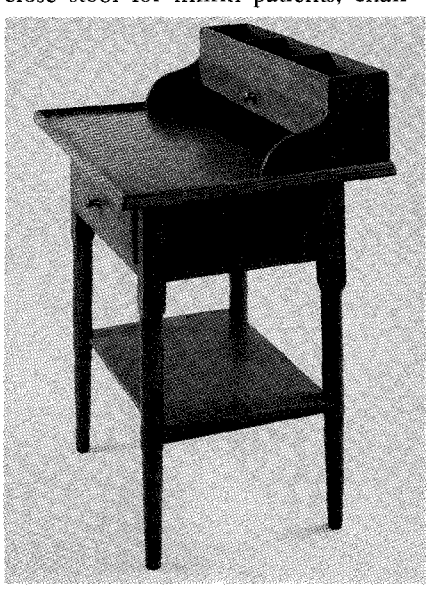
Shaker Design

by Caroline Morgan

In 1935 the Whitney Museum mounted the first comprehensive exhibit of Shaker artifacts, celebrating the simplicity and harmony of the Shaker artistic vision. This past summer, the Whitney opened a much more ambitious show of "Shaker Design," later shown at The Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, from October through January.

United Technologies Corporation, which is sponsoring "Shaker Design," has become an increasingly important corporate sponsor of art exhibitions in New York. This exhibit in particular complements the industries supporting it, since Shaker design, in the words of UTC President Robert Daniell, "is so purposeful in concept and so economical in execution."

Even more outstanding than the show is the full-color exhibition catalog in which many Shaker artists are identified for the first time. June Sprigg, guest curator, introduces artisans such as furniture-maker Henry Green, who sold Shaker pieces along the Maine seashore; physician James X. Smith, who designed an ingenious close stool for infirm patients; chair-



Work stand, circa 1825–50; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo by Paul J. Rocheleau.

maker Robert Wagan, who marketed Shaker products nationally through mail-order catalogs; watercolor artist Hannah Cohoon, whose designs appeared to her "brought by an angel"; and Isaac N. Youngs, a clockmaker who found it "needful and admisable" [sic] to install clocks in barns.

This catalog and exhibition with more than 100 pieces of furniture, household objects, tools, graphic designs, textiles, and textile equipment also focus in a meaningful way on the Shaker community which created and used these items. The spiritual purpose and strong will of Ann Lee, the founding Mother who lost her four children in infancy and later crossed an ocean to establish an enduring Utopian community, still shines through two centuries later in functional objects of simple beauty and perfect proportion.

The exhibit, however, could not possibly evoke the spiritual totality of the Shaker households and shops in which these objects were used. Relieved of familial anxieties and the demands of fashion in the outside world, Shaker artists shaped their designs to reflect the perfection of a higher reality. The remaining establishments which today can be visited as museums of the Shaker spirit have preserved Shaker artifacts in their proper settings. A table or chair that might appear too austere when displayed alone fits more appealingly into the symmetry of a communal dining room.

The peaceful attraction of Shaker design continues to endure, attracting thousands of visitors each year to museums like the Settlement in Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, which contains a famous free-standing double spiral staircase. In this complex, where my children saw their first floor loom in operation, visitors sense the quiet peacefulness with which generations of Shakers endowed the very windows, doors, and fences of Pleasant Hill. The quiet strength and joyous energy, which somehow coexist in such places, can still be felt in things as large as the dance patterns worn in the meetinghouse floor down to the smallest box and bonnet.

Caroline Morgan is a drama and art critic in New York.

Michael P. Hamilton

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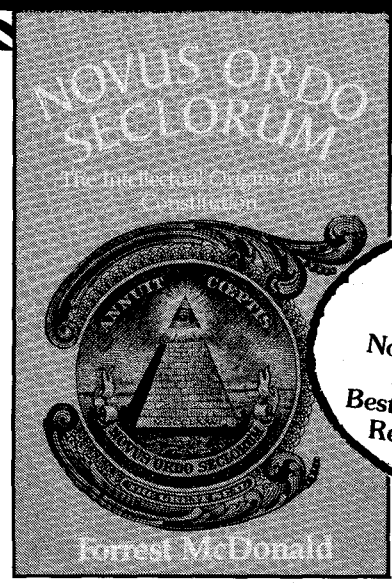

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grants. We could call it "Hands Across South Texas.")

What about that teenaged mother the Ford Foundation is worried about? And my wife reminds me that there are other people—ballet dancers, for instance—who really can't spare a year at age 18. That's easy. They can get deferments. But they'll be *deferments*. And for each year they put their service off, they'll serve an extra month. So if they don't get around to it until they're 30, when their 15-year-old daughters have children of their own, or their ballet careers are over, or whatever, they'll serve a year longer than an 18 year old.

But even those 30-year-old grandmothers and retired dancers should be in uniform. So should draftees with hernias and flat feet and unusual sexual preferences. Universal would mean *universal*, and putting conscripts in uniform would tell them, in effect: We wouldn't do this to you if it weren't important.

John Shelton Reed finished his graduate work in 1969 at the age of 27.

Letter From South Korea

by Thomas Molnar

Rice Paddies and Tea Houses

The schedule is rather monotonous for a lecturer invited to the big cities where universities are usually located. First comes the airport, then the car with the polite, smiling young man as a guide, then hotel room and restaurant, podium, introduction, photographs, the lecture itself—then the whole thing in reverse order the next day. Occasionally, the routine is broken by unexpected events, but the framework is generally predictable.

It was altogether different last July in South Korea. The invitation was for a whole week, and Seoul figured only as a quick stop, an arrival and departure. The rest of the time, five days, I was "centered" in the southern provincial town of Su-chon, the departure point every morning for a journey by car to the south, north, east, or west. The arrangement provided a marvelous opportunity to see unfamiliar countryside, meet real people (as opposed to intellectuals), eat in local or Chinese restaurants, usually sitting on the floor, visit tearooms, Buddhist shrines and monasteries, train stations (always more filled with common folk than are airports), and, yes, lecture halls.

The lectures themselves were not at universities but were organized by private local people simply curious to hear about the outside world. They came: teachers, housewives with children, old people traditionally dressed in white with a kind of narrow tophat tied under the chin. The audience did not understand a word I said but listened intently to my translator who, had he been cursing me, I would not have understood. We stood side by side on a podium; I said about five sentences which he took at least 10 minutes to translate, interpret, elaborate on, distort—I do not know to this day. But all went very well; I (we) received thundering applauses. One man in the audience in town X admitted that I was the first Western (white) man he had ever seen. I *was* in the hinterland. . . .

For whatever reason, these were remarkable days. I had always thought of Korea as the grim land divided by the DMZ (demilitarized zone), where two American officers were axed to death 10 years ago, provoking (as usual) no reaction from Washington. In my imagination, it had been a land of unfriendly bare mountains, strangely shouting karate champions. Now I saw a smiling, lovely countryside, charmingly meandering rice fields occupying every square inch between the hills. Where there are no paddies, the countryside presented a fabric of endless vegetable fields, fishponds, well-forested mountainsides, lovely streams and rivers with families picnicking on fish and watermelon. The towns, Seoul included, are nondescript, typical products of semi-Westernization, undecided between uglifying industry and agricultural or fishing centers. Toward evening, they became more habitable, with dimmed lights and the ever-present markets going on till midnight. Peasant women, squatted on streets and bridges, sell their produce to busy shoppers.

The villages are lovely gems. Often

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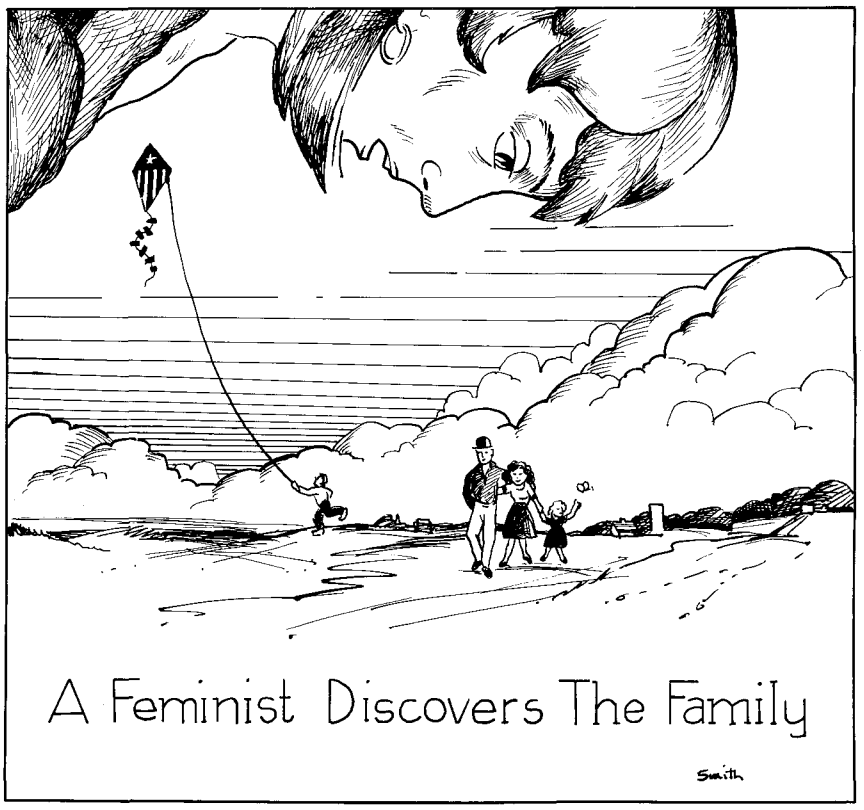

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not more than 12 or 15 homes, the typical village presents an eye-catching variety of Chinese roofs, each made of green tiles or blue, yellow or black, red or brown, adding color patches to the green of the paddies. Work on the fields continues until 9:00 or 10:00 but—this too is typically Chinese-Japanese-Korean—the men and women always seem to be taking it easy, and work seems a form of enthusiastic involvement. (Speak of underdevelopment: There is no comparison between steamy, ever-decaying India and sturdy, hardworking Korea or Taiwan.)

South Korea is a man's society. The country is industrialized, yet (at least in this Mediterranean-like South) industry has not corroded the country's social and family structure. The Koreans live in a temporarily happy halfway house between tradition and modernity. While my interpreter finished discoursing to *our* public, I often waited for him in an adjoined tea house, not the one from the operetta *Tea House of the August Moon*, but a real one. Since I was condemned to silence—absolutely nobody spoke English and even my translator, a professor, did not know that in South America they speak Spanish and Portuguese—I just looked and observed. The guests in the tea house were men only, since the tearoom is also a face-saving variety of a bordello. The head girl—geisha? madame?—wears an awfully gaudy dress, with jewels, from, I guess, a five-and-dime store. She and the other girls serve tea and beer, while the men show no inhibition in expressing their interests in feminine charm. Things can be arranged, but usually with discretion. The girl is invited to a hotel room to "serve tea," and indeed she will carry with her the tray, the samovar-like can, and the cups. The "arrangement" may or may not take its expected course. At any rate, no protesters have shown up here demanding equal rights for women or decrying the subjugation of women as "sex objects."

Traveling around south of Seoul, never far from the sea (studded with lovely islands, causeways, hills, gazebos, fish restaurants), I had all sorts of occasions to inquire about what occupies the South Korean mind. Number one is fear of a new attack from the North. People have not forgotten the horror of the invasion 36 years ago, nor MacArthur's brilliant counterstrategy. Preoccupation number two is Korea's backseat role not only in its relationship with America but also with Japan. Their admiration for, and apprehension of, the Japanese reminded me of East European attitudes toward Germany as a kind of elder brother who is often tough to live with but whose past offenses are now pushed far into the background by hatred of the Soviet Union. The Japanese seem numerous in Korea, just as they are increasingly visible almost everywhere on the planet—while U.S. troops and their families remain practically invisible. Yet America is problem number three, as is always the case between protector and client. The big worry: how to continue the country's industrial growth by selling more merchandise, including military equipment and car tires, on the American market.

It is also the U.S. which relentlessly pushes democratization. This does not fit Korean mentality and tradition, as it is also unfit for the Philippines, Iran, Nicaragua, or South Africa. However, the leaders in Seoul wish to avoid a Washington-engineered change of government (as in Manila or Tehran) and, like typical Orientals who adjust rather than resist (resistance comes later and it is slow), they want to be good pupils of the Big White Democrat. The upshot will be a new constitution prepared by politicians and professors, the unholiest of combinations. The opposition parties will provide an

REVISIONS

Plutarch Lives

A generation ago, a man of letters knew more than one alphabet. Even a Bohemian radical could be expected to know a little Greek and enough Chinese to spot the errors in Ezra Pound. Kenneth Rexroth knew that much and more. An often readable poet and a passable amateur as a scholar, Rexroth took good books seriously and in a series of *Saturday Review* essays, republished as *Classics Revisited* (New York: New Directions, 1965, republished with an afterword by Bradford Morrow, 1986), he shared his genial erudition with grateful readers in a more literate age.

Some critics are valuable for the stern justice they mete out even to the greatest writers. Rexroth, as Bradford Morrow observes, "venerates" even writers he didn't particularly care for, like Joyce. This trait is especially useful in essays on writers like Plutarch, whose great qualities he could admire without at all sympathizing with Plutarch's political views. In fact, Rexroth is remarkably sound on a host of ancient writers. Of Caesar: "His syntax on the page looks like speech; but like Ernest Hemingway's, it is not talk that can be uttered"; of the simplicity of the Greek anthology and its influence: "The greatest poetry still speaks Greek—in the simplest tragic language, the plain confrontation of beauty and love with Time, and nothing complex about it"; of Marcus Aurelius: "Proust without the narrative"; of Thucydides: "the inventor of the anti-democratic style."

Rexroth wasn't always that good and more than once gave way to the fashionable *gauchisme* that infected nearly everyone at the *Saturday Review*. The Persian wars were not a "successful defense of a democratic, rational, secular society." The Spartans, who did as much as any city to win the war, were profoundly antidemocratic and deeply religious. The Athenians were even more superstitious than when St. Paul twitted them for worshiping an unknown god. In the main, however, Rexroth rises above his prejudice with better grace than any critic who comes to mind, and while this suggests a certain shallowness of commitment to standards, his literary application of the Golden Rule is refreshing.

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ideal base for subversion, since the rioting Marxist teachers and students will have a safe, First Amendment-type, shelter. At public meetings, students already preach from North Korean textbooks, as they praise Kim Il Sung as the shining unifier of the nation and idolize the northern "socialist man." In my nightmare, I see this lovely, happy, hardworking people of the South cowering before the commissar who destroys their family life, rice paddies, and quiet monasteries with the deep-bowing monks.

I don't think it will happen, though. Moscow does not want to push Japan deeper into America's arms, because this is how Tokyo would react if South Korea were imperiled. Besides, Japan is quietly arming, too. My friends in Su-chon may go on picnicking, rice picking, visiting the monasteries and the tearooms. But they are still a normal people.

Thomas Molnar is on the faculty at the City University of New York and a visiting professor of religious studies at Yale University.

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On 'Pulling the Plugs'

May I be permitted to make a correction, complaint, and observation about Walter Beale's review of my book in your November 1986 issue? First, the correction: The title of my book is *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, not *Entertaining Ourselves to Death*, as Professor Beale has it. Perhaps this is a small point, but, I can assure you, the title of the book is right there on its cover, and one is a bit unnerved to think that a reviewer didn't notice it.

The complaint: Professor Beale makes the point that in 1948 Richard Weaver said many of the same things I do now and said them about radio, newspapers, and cinematic journalism. The implication is that I fuss too much about television since the problem predates television. I agree with Weaver and Professor Beale on this point. That is why I devote a chapter in the book to discussing how the telegraph, photograph, penny newspapers, and other 19th-century media began the process of dissolving literate discourse. I tried to make it clear that television is the culmination, not the origin of the problem. Professor Beale does me an injustice by not mentioning this.

The observation: Professor Beale spends a few sentences critiquing General Semantics, noting that I am the editor of *Etc.*, which he describes (probably accurately) as one of the last remaining vestiges of General Semantics. I raise no complaint against Professor Beale for not having read *Etc.* over the past 10 years; that is, over the period of time I edited the journal. (I have recently withdrawn as editor.) I merely wish to observe that if, as Professor Beale remarks, General Semantics has "loosened its connection with scientism and no longer engages in arcane prescriptions to 'objectify' language," my efforts as editor of *Etc.* had something to do with that. I certainly agree with Professor Beale that it is a modern superstition to believe in communication as a panacea, and he will not find that superstition in the pages of *Etc.* from 1976 to 1986.

—Neil Postman

Prof. Beale Replies

I'm very sorry that I mistranscribed the title of Mr. Postman's book. It *is* right there on the cover, and it was absentminded of me to get it wrong.

To any further charge of injustice to Mr. Postman, however, I plead not guilty. The central flaw that I find in Postman's analysis is not that it lacks historical perspective but that it lacks perspective on the role of ideas and values in history. In pointing out that the deteriorizations of culture Mr. Postman associates with television were well along before its advent, I was not overlooking Postman's treatment

of the telegraph and the newspaper; I was underscoring the proposition that Postman has adopted a simplistic and formalistic account of the relation between techniques and culture. There is a great struggle going on right now between those who insist that the *substance* of education is of prime importance and those who are preoccupied with methods and processes. That substance can be corrupted by a process of transmission (television), Postman well demonstrates; that adequate substance can therefore be assured by "media consciousness" is a fallacy, and I don't think it was unjust of me to dwell upon this error in an otherwise valuable book.

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SCREEN

The Mythological South

by Katherine Dalton

Down By Law, written and directed by Jim Jarmusch; produced by Black Snake/Grokenberger Film; released by Island Pictures.

Sherman's March, written and directed by Ross McElwee.

Jim Jarmusch's *Down By Law* opens with rolling shots of New Orleans—townhouses, tenements, the down and out on a crummy side-street. From there we enter into two variations on the theme of domestic disharmony, Jack's and Zack's, and on to a story set in a South that never was, by a filmmaker who, until the film was written and financed, had never been there.

Jarmusch, a young man with silver hair from Cleveland, first made a name for himself with his remarkably successful, shoestring budgeted *Stranger Than Paradise*. A black-and-white feature film about two small-time émigré cardsharks and a newly arrived cousin, with whole scenes filmed from a single camera angle (mostly because Jarmusch couldn't afford anything else), the movie was stranger than nearly anything. But it won Jarmusch kudos from the critics and even accolades from the great Japanese director Kurosawa.

Like *Stranger Than Paradise, Down By Law* is also done in black and white. One reason he decided to work in it again, says Jarmusch, is he thought it would leave the year the action takes place imprecise. In that he succeeds—this is a film without a year or even a season (for this is the South, remember); once upon a time, he could begin; long, or perhaps not so long, ago . . . In a modernized, odd way, the film is as perverse and peculiar as a Grimm fairy tale; it is equally dateless.

And, like the characters in Jarmusch's first film, the leads in this one have no roots and precious little past. Jack and Zack, the two losers who end up getting thrown in the Orleans Parish Prison for crimes they didn't even commit, could perhaps never have been children, never have lived elsewhere, never been anything other than the fired disc jockey and small-time pimp they are when we first meet them.

What turns their lives around, fuels the movie, steals the show, and makes this film as wonderfully funny as *Stranger Than Paradise* was oppressively silent, is Roberto Benigni, the Italian comedian and director whom Jarmusch met while in Italy and for whom he wrote the part of Roberto.

Roberto first enters the movie the night Zack (played by Tom Waits) is sitting in the garbage, blind drunk on Wild Turkey and the misery of having lost another job and his girlfriend. "It's a sad and beautiful world," Roberto says; a bit of English he has clearly carefully prepared. "Buzz off," says Zack. "Buzz off to you too," Roberto responds happily, as though Zack had wished him a good evening.

Roberto next appears in prison, where he is assigned to the same cell that Jack and Zack, previously strangers, had been put into. Jack and Zack have tried ineptly to get to know each other, but it's been the blind leading the blind, or, more accurately, as Jarmusch's constant concern is with characters choking on their own inarticulateness, the dumb singing. Roberto changes all that. He provides a constant stream of broken English and energy that the two Americans desperately need, though they only gradually come to realize it.

With some dinosaurs, it is said, it took seven minutes for a signal from the brain to be translated into movement. Jack and Zack can be very nearly as slow. But their slowness doesn't come from brainlessness so much as from defeat; from being loveless and utterly lost; from missing something they have, perhaps, never known. It's as if as children they were never held, and now that they are grown, something has cut them off from the women who try to care for them, and from even the simply reasonable behavior that would allow them some small measure of success.

Even Roberto, who loves easily, can only heal them a little bit. After the three break out of jail (it is Roberto who discovers the way, of course) and make their way somehow through a Louisiana swamp, Roberto finds his true love in an Italian girl improbably stranded in Luigi's Tin-Top, a restaurant she inherited that's stuck on the edge of the swamp. He plans to settle there with Nicoletta and wants his friends to stay, but they can't. Drifters to the end, they make their way to the fork in the road, one going East and one going West, though Nicoletta is unsure of her directions, and neither Jack nor Zack know which way goes which. It doesn't really matter.

Ross McElwee, in his very funny, low-budget comedic documentary *Sherman's March*, is similarly lost and floating in another South. Having secured funds for a documentary on General Sherman, whose march to the sea is not forgotten south of Maryland, McElwee suddenly got dumped by his girlfriend and found himself without the heart or interest to tackle Sherman. Thus the movie became more about the devastation various Southern women wreak on McElwee, rather than about anything Sherman

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did to Atlanta or its environs.

Sherman's March is a form of cinema verité, where nothing is rehearsed or scripted—which just goes to show that real life is weirder and funnier than anything you or I could possibly make up. McElwee's characters are all real—from his sister and her plastic surgery, to Claudia's survivalist friends, to McElwee's former girlfriend, to Karen's new boyfriend Cam and his incessant and incomprehensible trading of life-sized plastic animals.

This isn't the imagined South Jarmusch created. But if McElwee's isn't a mythological South, it's a South mythologized. Certainly Charleen, an old friend and former teacher of McElwee's who is determined to get him fixed up and settled down, who is so imposing, bawdy and funny, is larger than life. This is despite the fact that, seeing as McElwee's camera is always perched on his shoulder, even during some pretty painful conversations, this film is intimate in a way no regular staged film can be. (I think that this intimacy is just what cinema verité directors got into this kind of filmmaking to achieve and is the reason they prefer the camera-slung-across-the-shoulder technique to the more normal, silent, omnipresent third-party technique all feature films and most documentaries assume.)

So McElwee has managed to stitch together (with even an occasional tie-in to the original subject of his film, William Tecumseh) a homey sort of tale. *Sherman's March* has none of the occasional ominousness of *Down By Law* (an ominousness which is never overt but never goes away, either), and Ross McElwee as the central character of his own movie is reassuringly inarticulate even as Jack and Zack are slightly creepily so. But if only in bringing the camera lens in so close on a South that for both filmmakers may be more cliché than reality, they have transformed a little daily life into the rudderless, fumbling stuff of legend.

Katherine Dalton writes from New York.

ART

A Peek at Burghley

by Shehbaz Safrani

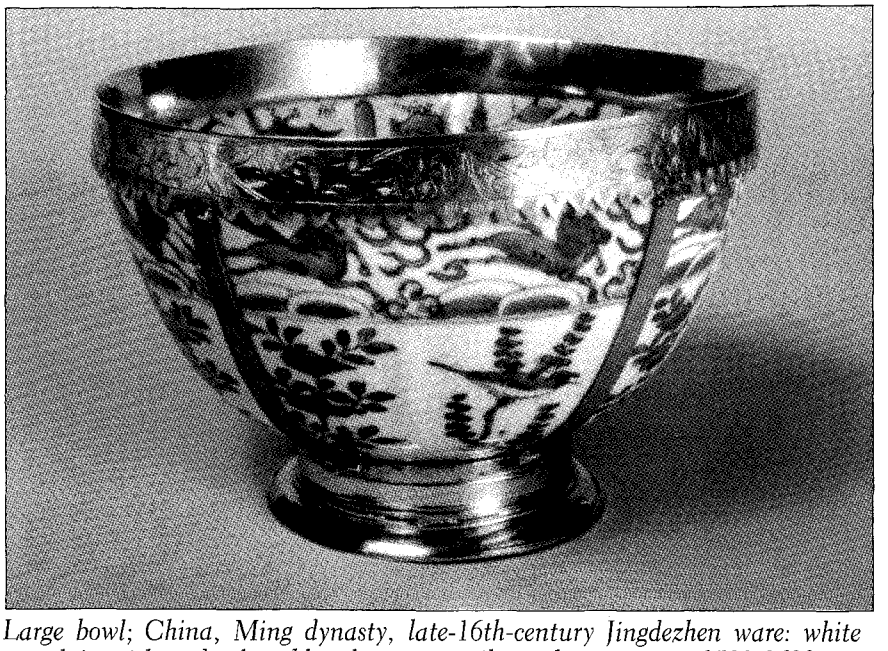
William III took one look at Burghley House (the Elizabethan residence of the Cecil family) and declared it "too great for a subject." Four hundred years old in the democratic year of 1986, Burghley is exposing some of its treasures to the prying eyes of ordinary Americans.

The Burghley Porcelains went on view at New York City's Japan House Gallery on May 15. After closing here on July 27, this show travels to the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, from December 2, 1986, through February 1, 1987, and thereafter tours in four cities in Japan until 1988. The exhibition was made possible by grants from American Express Company and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Burghley House was built by William Cecil (1520-1598) according to his own designs. As first Lord Burghley and the great minister and Lord High Treasurer to Queen Elizabeth I, William Cecil became very affluent. Cecil's descendants were made Earls of Exeter in 1605 and Marquesses in 1801. Cecil built Burghley House between 1555 and 1587 on the remains of a 12th-century monastery, and its architecture is widely recognized as among the finest of its period.

Small wonder that William III remarked in 1690 that it was "too large for a subject." What is significant is that the Burghley collection of art includes outstanding paintings by European masters, furniture, tapestries, statuaries, and silver. At the recently concluded exhibition at the National Gallery in the capital, for instance, "Treasure Houses of Britain" included a Queen Anne silver cistern weighing 3,400 ounces, among a number of objects from the Burghley House.

Daniel Defoe, of *Robinson Crusoe* fame, on the other hand, saw Burghley differently in 1724. "More like a town than a house," he wrote. "The towers and the pinnacles so high, and



Large bowl; China, Ming dynasty, late-16th-century Jingdezhen ware: white porcelain with underglaze blue decoration; silver-gilt mounts, c. 1580-1600; H. 13.9 cm., Diam. (at rim) 21.5 cm.

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placed at such distance from one another, look like so many distant parish-churches in a great town." Atop Burghley House is a small stone forest consisting of columns, obelisks, lions, and even a watchtower.

Burghley House benefited from the efforts of successive generations of Cecils. The grounds are the work of Capability Brown. Using the ample grounds, Capability Brown left an enduring bridge in the Palladian style, with a trout-filled river flowing naturally beneath it. It must be remembered that in their Italianate ambitions, the French ventured and tamed nature surrounding their chateaux. Versailles, for example, is inhospitable to most humans. The Anglo-Saxons, for their part, left matters happily in the hands, capable hands one might say, of gifted landscapers like Capability Brown. Before long, Capability Brown brought nature to the very doorstep of the English, and in the process he allowed for their proverbial privacy as well. Where there stood gorgeous hills, Brown had them flattened. Then just as easily, he reversed the process when he discovered marshes. And out of the flattened hills, Brown devised man-made lakes, and cascades, of which Burghley has ample evidence. In this unique process of making nature according to his whims, Capability Brown incurred the wrath of the British Parliament during the construction and landscaping of *Blenheim* for the first Duke of Marlborough. Until 1981 Burghley House was the residence of the Sixth Marquess of Exeter, who won the 1928 IX Olympiad 400-meter hurdles. His early sportslife, as a matter of fact, was a feature of the film *Chariots of Fire*. Burghley House is *not* a part of Britain's National Trust. It still belongs to the Cecil family, whose trustees invited the late Marquess' Lady Victoria Leatham "to live at Burghley and to conserve its resources for the future." Lady Victoria, who spoke at Japan Society in New York on May 18, 1986, observed that those who lived in great houses were not expected to know the extent of their possessions. By way of illustration, she recounted the cautionary tale of a young man invited for the weekend to the country place of a temperamental duke.

No sooner had the young man been shown into the duke's residence than he commented admiringly on the beautiful carved chairs. Utterly displeased by the young man's verbal appreciation of his furniture, the duke's monacle "popped out of his eye." Instantly, he ordered his footman to replace the young man's luggage back in the car and ordered his chauffeur to "leave at once." "The damn fella commented on m'chairs!"

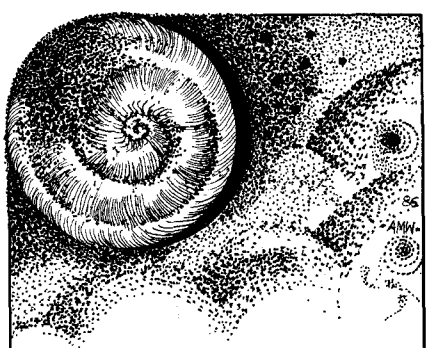
The Japan House exhibit of Burghley porcelains is an ingenious selection from an embarrassment of riches. No efforts were made, for instance, to make these porcelains appear as if they were taken out of a *Wunderkammer*. In all-white glass cases with proper lighting, the porcelains were laid out. Only in one case, a pair of Edo wrestlers from 1690 were placed on a revolving disk—more to suggest motions of wrestling than to make any statement.

The 292-page catalog, with over 150 black-and-white and 90 color illustrations published by New York's Japan Society, is addressed to a wide audience. Besides essays by Rand Castile (former director of Japan House) and Lady Victoria Leatham (chatelaine of Burghley House) a team of top-notch international scholars, curators, and connoisseurs brings us closer to the spirit of Burghley House.

In all, there are some 205 porcelains, mostly Japanese, beginning with rare and important examples of 17th- and 18th-century Arita and Kakeimon wares. The Edo period, 1660-1680, *Lobed Dish* is a fine example of Arita from Burghley. The design is a preoccupation for this anonymous ceramicist, and it is fairly common to discover such ideas prevalent among most Japanese porcelains.

While the Japanese pieces dominate the show, the exhibition also displays 25 porcelains of the Ming, Transitional, and early Qing periods (ca. 1550-1750). The two most significant Chinese porcelains from Burghley include a blue-and-white *Charger With Daoist Emblems* and a large Ming blue-and-white bowl with silver-gilt mounts. The Ming bowl was brought to England by Sir Francis Drake in 1580 when he captured a Spanish ship filled with similar porcelains. Elizabeth I herself had shares in Drake's voyage. According to the curator of the collection, Dr. Nishida, several shards of blue-and-white, found at Drake's Bay in California, where Sir Francis is said to have careened his ships, bear designs greatly resembling those on this bowl. The Burghley bowl, however, came as a direct gift from Elizabeth I to her godchild Thomas Walsingham. His granddaughter, Lady Osborne, gave it to the Eighth Earl of Exeter in 1731. These tangible remains, so beautiful to look at and if possible to hold, as is the case at some of the finer auction houses, have much with which to instruct us.

Shehbaz Safrani is a writer and painter based in New York City.



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STAGE

Time Will Tell

by David Kaufman

As if he still had somewhere to get to, Neil Simon finally *arrived* in 1986: 25 years after his first play, *Come Blow Your Horn*, opened on Broadway, or 18 plays and four musicals later. With more than a third of the decade remaining, *Time* magazine had the audacity to proclaim *Broadway Bound* "the best American play of the 1980's." The same splashy cover story

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on its author also pronounced that "after decades of acclaims as a craftsman, Neil Simon may finally come to be regarded as an artist." If nothing else, the very fact that *Time* has declared *Broadway Bound* the best play of the 1980's makes it so. *Time* is, after all, not in the dubious business of reporting on history, but creating it as well. Still, the disposition of an artist remains beyond the powers of even Luce's empire.

In the parlance of more thoughtful circles, Neil Simon has been viewed from the beginning of his career as a master craftsman, but no more. These same "thinking" people acknowledge that he is the most successful, the most popular of contemporary playwrights—indeed and as far as can be told, in the history of the genre. One of the more portable contentions for hype even conjectures that more people have seen Simon's works than have seen Shakespeare's. But until recently, and aside from his lone champion in Walter Kerr, the critics as well as the more pretentious theatergoers remained unimpressed.

History may not be on their side. The oversimplified logic of the snob fails to recognize that Shakespeare *was* the most popular dramatist in his day. Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, and Plautus were hardly elitists, either. Even Ibsen and Chekhov, after hurdling some early obstacles, achieved significance and attention long before their *oeuvres* were completed. Henri Troyat notes of Chekhov's reception: "The pattern was familiar: most of Chekhov's plays had received guarded if not hostile reviews before making a sudden hit with the public." The same "pattern" perfectly describes Simon, who over the years apparently had been punished for his very popularity.

The comparison is not entirely irrelevant. Over the years, critics who wanted to give Simon the benefit of the doubt have frequently invoked Chekhov's name. However ludicrous the comparisons, both Chekhov and Simon have found a tension between comedy and tragedy. In his *oeuvre* to date, Simon has been most misunderstood to the extent that he has been dismissed as being exclusively a comedic writer. Where Chekhov and Simon differ most sharply is in their outlook: Chekhov's more farcical impulses remained relentlessly pessimistic; Simon, who in some respects can be as tragic as Chekhov, cannot avoid being more hopeful. (Perhaps the difference is geographical—the Russian Steppes versus the American Plains?) For Simon, the comedy *is* cathartic, a release from the daily burdens of the death in life. For Chekhov, the ennui is inescapable—we sense that even if *The Three Sisters* made it to Moscow their mood would eventually prevail upon their new circumstances, and not the other way around.

The comparison has never seemed as valid as it does today with two of the three plays in his new autobiographical cycle—specifically those that occur in the Jerome family home. In *Brighton Beach Memoirs* especially, the presence of the extended family (which finds Aunt Blanche and her two daughters living with her sister Kate—Mrs. Jerome) within the Jerome family seems to directly echo the Chekhovian mode. At the end of the play, the expected arrival of countless cousins from Poland, to escape the Holocaust, only adds to the Chekhovian feeling.

The one thing Simon has always wanted was the one thing he lacked—critical respect. As if his already busy muse were suddenly working overtime, all of that has changed during the past three years with his alliterative trilogy of plays. Beginning with *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, which won the important New York Drama Critics Award for best play in 1983, picking up momentum with *Biloxi Blues*, for which Simon received his first Tony Award in 1985, and now culminating with *Broadway Bound*, which opened last December (the same month that the film version of *Brighton Beach* was released), Simon has emerged as one of the most praised American playwrights in the history of American theater. Although the scholars have yet to catch up with the new appraisals, the more academic encomiums

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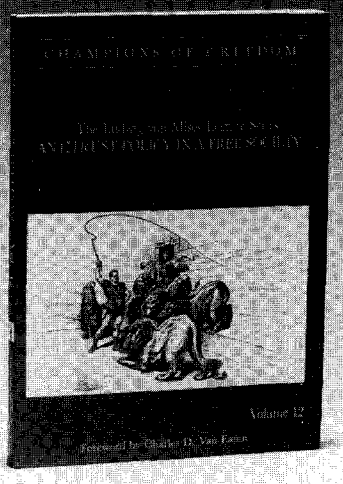

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seem imminent. Within a year or two, Robert K. Johnson's critical study—*Neil Simon*, published in 1983—will not be the only serious investigation on the bookshelf. (Parenthetically, Johnson's first chapter is called "Broadway Bound"—it's difficult not to construe some "bemused borrowing" by Simon.)

Now that he is finally being taken seriously, what, after all, has Simon really done to bring about this "bountiful belated breakthrough" with his autobiographical trilogy? In fact, is this series of plays any more autobiographical than his first play, *Come Blow Your Horn*, which incidentally picks up precisely at the moment where *Broadway Bound* ends, when he and his brother leave home to establish themselves as adults in Manhattan? Or his next offering, *Barefoot in the Park*, which we knew all along was based on the early period of his first marriage? Or for that matter, his 1977 opus, *Chapter Two*, which described his difficulty in coping with the premature death by cancer of his first wife and his subsequent marriage to Marsha Mason? Even *The Odd Couple*, which many considered the best in the canon, derived at least partial inspiration from his brother Danny, who has turned up time and again in Simon's life and in the plays.

The cast of Neil Simon's new play, Broadway Bound, *directed by Gene Saks; at the Broadhurst Theatre. Photo: Martha Swope & Associates.*

Curiously, the new trilogy only *seems* more autobiographical than Imogene Coca's *Your Show of Shows*. It's also germane to note that Simon's aunt and cousins didn't stay for a time with his family, as he depicts in *Brighton Beach*; instead, he and his mother were actually taken in by them.

To a certain extent, such dissembling and a rearrangement of the facts have always been the license of fiction without diminishing the notion of autobiographical connections. What does need explanation, however, is the rather mistaken supposition that Simon has *suddenly* turned to autobiography. The critics have been duped what has come before. When all is said and done, Simon did not grow up in the Brighton Beach section of Brooklyn that he has now immortalized, but rather in Washington Heights, located at the northern most part of Manhattan. He didn't go to boot camp in Biloxi, Mississippi, but in Colorado. And when he and his brother Danny left home, it wasn't to write for Broadway, but for CBS radio and later television, where they progressed from working on *The Phil Silvers Arrow Show* to joining the team (including Woody Allen and Mel Brooks) that wrote for Sid Caesar and in part by Simon's introduction of one Eugene Morris Jerome, perhaps his most loving invention to date. Eugene is the adolescent narrator who guides us through the Jerome household in Brighton Beach in 1937. Eugene turns up next in 1943 on the train bound for boot camp in Biloxi. But both in *Biloxi Blues* and in *Broadway Bound*, which takes place some years later back home in Brighton Beach, the narrative device is compromised when Eugene is not the first to greet us on stage. Eugene becomes more obviously what he has been from the start, just another Simon character, albeit one contrived to beguile us in a special, *confidential* way.

Indeed, in *Biloxi* the story belongs as much to the ensemble of six new recruits as it does to Eugene. As Simon's spokesman, Eugene is merely the one who lived to tell the tale. An argument could even be made that Arnold Epstein, the only other Jewish member of the platoon, is the more central force and certainly the catalyst. As far as the Simon formula goes, Arnold is the mentor and spiritual guide, the surrogate for Stanley in the two other "B" plays, for Alan in *Come Blow Your Horn*, for Leo in *Chapter Two*—in short, as we're left to infer, for Danny Simon in Neil Simon's life.

For all of Simon's efforts to resolve his relationship with Danny, that relationship continues to be mercurial and mysterious, at least to us and presumably to Simon as well. Perhaps his greatest masterpiece will prove to be a play more exclusively devoted to his relationship with his brother—the play which has yet to be written. The role of the paterfamilias in the autobiographical trilogy is too vague to shed any light on the more pivotal relationship with the brother. While Mr. Jerome, though weakened by his heart condition, is definitely the head of the house in *Brighton Beach*, he is barely a shadow by the time of *Broadway Bound*, deserting his wife and family for an extramarital affair; he is even less of a character within the structure of the play itself.

Eugene's special position in *Broadway Bound* is even more jeopardized than it is in *Biloxi Blues*. As all are quick to agree, this last play in the trilogy pays homage not so much to Simon's early days as a writer but to his

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mother, here realized by Linda Lavin's bravura performance as Kate. If Kate's already famous monologue in Act II is provoked by Eugene, still Eugene, who is sitting at the dining-room table, recedes along with the present while she relives the one glorious moment of her life when she danced with George Raft. This moment is destined to be recalled in the annals of theater history because the monologue as written, and specifically as portrayed by Lavin, transports us along with herself to another time and another place that will live within the character.

During this episode, Eugene's asides ("There's a whole movie in this story, ma. One day I'm gonna write it" or "And with my mother, I didn't need God to punish me") have as little effect on us as they do on Kate. And after Eugene fills in for George Raft and dances with Kate to a big band version of *It Had To Be You* on the radio, the Oedipal implications never get any deeper than, "Dancing with my mother was very scary. I was doing what my father was supposed to be doing but wasn't." This is the closest that Simon gets to the soul-baring which we usually associate with "art."

While Eugene ultimately proves to be less of a meaningful figure in the trilogy than one might expect, numerous references abound throughout the trilogy to Eugene-as-Simon's nascent development as a writer. But they are all facile, glib insertions, cheap shots, really. In a wonderfully ironic self-coronation, Eugene is nicknamed "Shakespeare" in *Biloxi*. But none of these plays is self-revealing in the way that O'Neill often exposed himself and derived his art in the process. The only piece of self-criticism appears in *Biloxi* when Epstein offers: "You have to get involved. You don't get involved enough, Eugene. . . . You're a witness. You're always standing around *watching* what's happening. Scribbling in your book what other people do. You have to get in the middle of it. You have to take sides. Make a contribution to the fight." But even that advice is offset in the same play by the more flattering suggestion that Eugene's diary observations were legitimate insights: He summarizes Carney as a person who "can't be counted on," and Carney later admits that his girl back home used "those exact words" to describe him.

The most revealing line in the trilogy was unintentional. It arrives—of course!—as a humorous throwaway in *Brighton Beach*, after the dramatic reading of Mrs. Murphy's letter to Aunt Blanche announcing that her son Frank won't be able to keep his dinner engagement. When Eugene responds, "It was a sad letter, all right, but it sure was well written. Maybe I should have been born in Ireland," how can we avoid hearing Simon himself pouring his heart out, wishing—like Norman Mailer—that he were a part of the legacy that includes Yeats, Shaw, Beckett, O'Casey, Wilde, and to a lesser degree, Behan.

On a more mundane level, the integrity of the trilogy is disturbed by the startling realization that in the first play near the end of Act I, Kate tells her sister Blanche, "If Poppa ever heard me say those words, he'd get up from the cemetery." By the time of *Broadway Bound*, which takes place in the "late 1940's" or roughly 10 years later, their father has most miraculously arisen from the grave to appear as a full-fledged, feisty character, Ben.

Both the response to Mrs. Murphy's letter and the line which suggests that Ben was dead were eliminated from the film version of *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. In opening up the film (and for example introducing Mrs. Murphy as a full-fledged character, circumventing the need for the letter), Simon and Hollywood have dissolved the Chekhovian spirit that congealed on stage. Aside from the sometimes elusive changes in the script, the most noticeable difference is that Blythe Danner is far more severe than Elizabeth Franz, who initiated the role of Kate. Nor does Jonathan Silverman achieve the special quality of disingenuous naiveté that was Matthew Broderick's stock-in-trade and *own* contribution to the original Eugene—though he tries, and sometimes even too obviously.

But this is a digression, especially considering that *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Biloxi Blues*, and *Broadway Bound* are three solid and mature works from one of our most accomplished playwrights. If they are not Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey in to Night*, they may very well comprise Neil Simon's *Long Day's Journey*.

David Kaufman is a theater critic in New York City.

Ezra Pound's 'Language of Eternity'

(continued from page 23)

of Ovid's poem, that individuality is merely a *mask*, a temporary giving of face to the flux of eternity. And so it was for Pound too.

At Pisa Pound underwent the most sustained trial of faith of any poet known to me. As had the exiled Ovid before him, there Pound earned in tears (while that classical civilization for which he cared with reckless ultimate love lay virtually shattered on top of him) his own "outstanding right to have gazed upon gods' faces."

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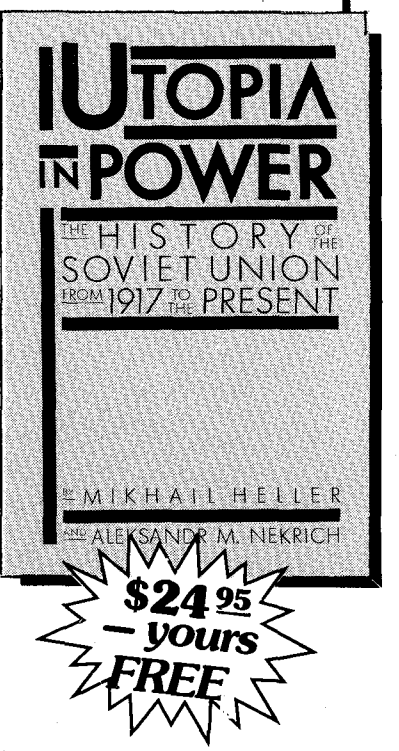

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